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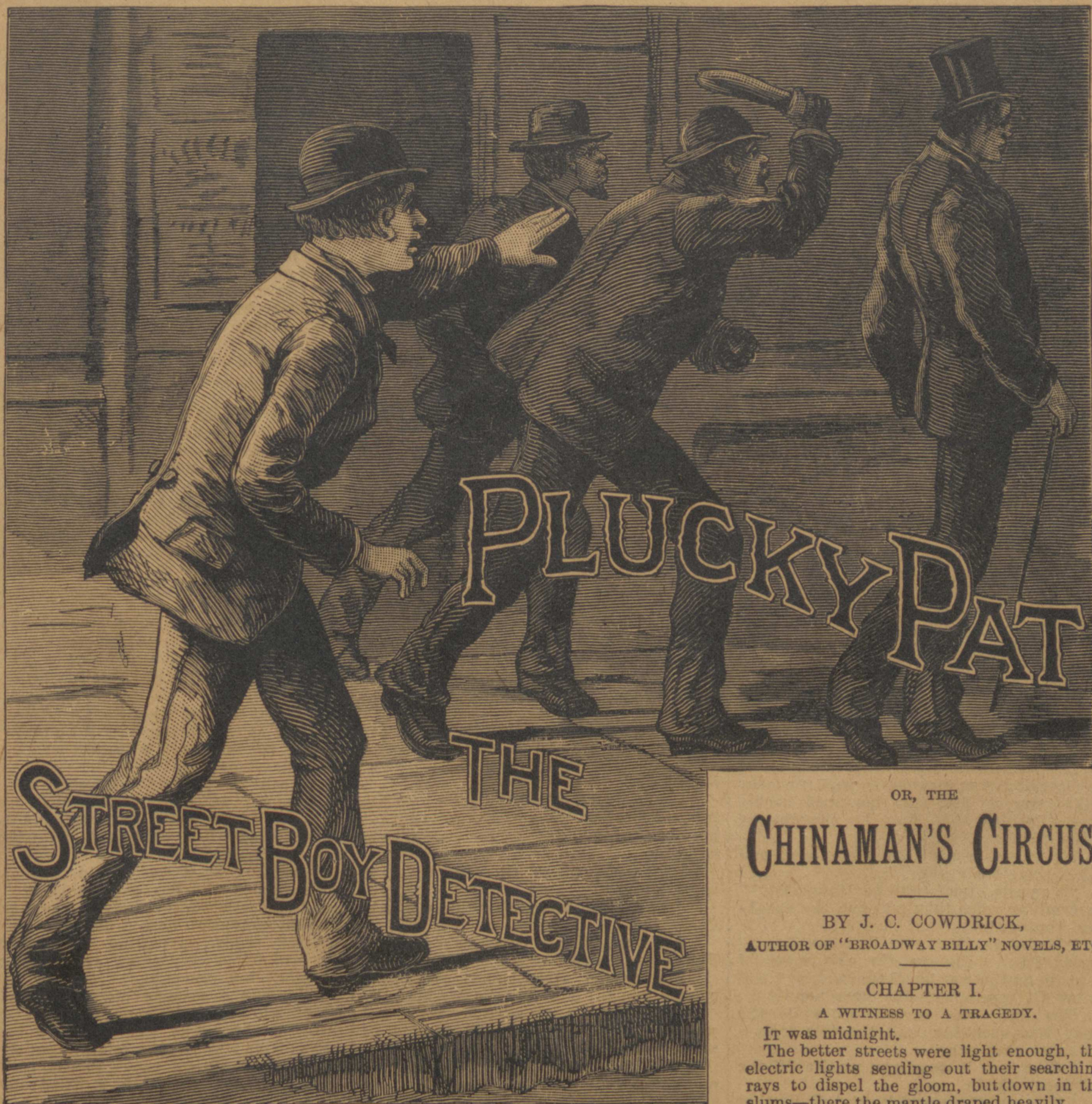
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PLUCKY PAT THE STREET BOY DETECTIVE

OR, THE
CHINAMAN'S CIRCUS.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A WITNESS TO A TRAGEDY.

It was midnight.

The better streets were light enough, the electric lights sending out their searching rays to dispel the gloom, but down in the slums—there the mantle draped heavily.

There were places dark and forbidding, uninviting by day, by night repelling,

"HOWLD ON, THERE!" SHOUTED PAT. "NONE AV THAT, YE THAFE AV
THE WURRLD, YE!"

Through such a street a young Irish lad was making his way homeward.

He was a sturdy fellow of seventeen, with keen eyes and an intelligent face, and while not handsome by any means, neither was he bad-looking.

A telegraph messenger, his hours were such that he had to work until twelve o'clock, and the shortest way to his humble home lay through this unsavory section of the great metropolis.

But Pat Mahon was no coward, and he had no hesitancy about taking the shortest route.

Who would think of doing harm to a fellow like him?

He knew the section well, and that it was a resort of "thugs."

On this night, however, an adventure awaited him, opening up a drama in real life in which he was destined to play a leading role, a distinction he might have declined had he been consulted about it.

He had just turned a corner, when a startling scene burst upon him.

There was a light on that corner, and by its rays he was enabled to take in the whole situation at a glance.

There were three figures, moving forward into the gloom that lay beyond the pale of the lamp at the corner; the first a well-dressed man wearing a silk hat and carrying a cane, but considerably the worse for liquor, apparently.

The other two were a brace of the thugs of that neighborhood, a pair of as villainous-looking fellows as Pat Mahon had ever had the misfortune to fall in with. They were slouching along after the first-mentioned, one of them carrying a sand bag in his right hand.

Pat Mahon took it all in at once, as said, and he knew what it meant.

He started to run forward, acting upon his first impulse, and just as he did so the man with the sand bag raised his arm to strike a blow.

"Hould on, there!" shouted Happy Pat. "None uv dhat, ye thaife av dhe wurrul, ye!" And he ran the faster, quite forgetting in his excitement that he was only a youth and that they were two against one.

Even as he ran the blow was struck, and the gentleman fell to the sidewalk without a cry or struggle. And then, instantly, the two men turned upon Happy Pat, and in another moment he had shared the same fate. He suddenly saw a million stars, and then all was a blank.

When Pat Mahon came to he did not know where he was.

Neither could he recall what had happened. His mind was wandering, and it was some moments before he could get his bearings.

He was in a room, somewhere, but everything was strange to him, and the light was so dim that he could hardly see anything. At first he thought he was all alone.

He raised himself on his elbow, and then some one spoke.

"You alle samee come to, Happy Pat?" a familiar voice inquired, and the speaker appeared.

"Hello! Is dhat you, Fan-tan Tom?" cried Pat. "Phwere dhe ould mischief am Oi, and phwat has happened me? Ha! now Oi remimber, dhe omadhouns!"

The light was turned up while the boy was speaking, and the two took a look at each other.

"Who was it done you up, Pat?" the Chinese asked.

"Two av dhe worst-lookin' divils thot Oi ever set me two eyes upon, Oi can tell ye," answered Pat.

"And what they done it for, allee samee? You tellee me, and see if we don't gittee even with 'em, allee samee, somehow."

"You can bet yure swate loife dhat we will—lasteways Oi will, and Oi ever get dhe chance at thim," declared the Irish lad, with much earnestness.

"But what for they knockee you outee?"

"Because, begorra, Oi was onto dheir shape in a job dhey wur a-doin' wid a gintleman dhat was rollin' on hoigh seas."

"You don't tellee me! You know them?"

"Oi think one of them was Nig Branty, but Oi couldn't be sure av it."

"Hi yi! Then othel one was Con Keller, me muchee bettee. You findee out, Pat, you findee out."

"Bet yure swate loife Oi will, Fan-tan Tom; and so will dhey, av Oi get half a chance at dhem. But, say, how came Oi here, Oi want to know?"

"Me findee you on stleet, bling you here. Me out late play fan-tan; when comee home findee you, and pickee you up and bling you 'long. No wantee police scoopee you in, see?"

"Well, I'm a heap obliged to you, Fan-tan, but didn't you see anything av dhe feller?"

"No; me see no othel fellel, Pat."

"Dhen Oi wondher phwat became av him? He got a deuce av a swipe on de cocoanut wid a sand bag, dhe same as Oi got mesel', only a hape worse, Oi'm thinkin' it must 'a' been. He wint down all in a hape."

"Me no see him, Pat."

"Dhen dhey must 'a' dragged him into some place and gone through him. Pwhat toime is it? Sure, dhe police ought to know about dis."

"'Most thlee o'clock."

"Whew! but Oi have been a long while dead, so to spake. Fan-tan, Oi am a hape obliged to ye fur dhe throuble ye have been to."

"That allee samee all light," answered the Chinese.

"Phwere is me hat?"

"Here it is, Patsy. You wantee me go with you? Me go, you say so, you bettee."

"No, Oi guess Oi can make out alone, Fan-tan, if dhe head av me will ownly stay sthll and not be swimmin' around so. Sure, Oi fale as if Oi had a buzz in me brain."

"Mebby you bettel stay here all nightee."

Pat ruefully rubbed his head, for there was a very sore place.

He was half inclined to think that the Chinese was right, and that he had better stay, but he wanted to tell the police what he had seen, and also wanted to get home.

So he made an effort and got up on his feet, and, after awhile, he got so that he could stand and could walk fairly straight.

"Dhere, Oi guess Oi can make it now," he said.

"People allee samee think you dlunk, Pat."

"Let thim think phwat dhey plaze, Fan-tan; Oi don't care."

"But maybe allee samee policeman runnee you in; how that be for high?"

"Let dhem run me av dhey want to," said Pat Mahon. "Dhat is phwere Oi am bound fur anyhow, ain't it?"

"Well, me hopee you gittee into no more flouble. You lettee me know all about it, when you findee out? Mebby man sure enough git killee, then be big time."

"Bet yure loife."

By that time Pat had got his grip, so that he could walk pretty well, and saying good-by to his Chinese friend, he set forth.

"Beggorra," he mused, as he went along, "it was a dirthy thrick dhey played on dhat gintleman, so it was, and av Oi can chip in on his side Oi am goin' to do it."

A sudden thought came to him.

Why not go back to the place and see if anything could be seen of him.

He decided that he would do that. He knew where he was, where he had been at that time, and so set forth.

Perhaps he would find the body somewhere near, if they had killed him, for Fan-tan Tom might have passed it without seeing it if it had been left lying close to the buildings.

If not dead, he might be in time to lend him aid.

He made haste, all the haste he could, dizzy as he was, and ere long was once more on the scene.

There was nothing in sight. No one was moving on the street, there was no sign of a body where he had seen the man fall, and there was no hiding place near at hand.

He went along a little farther, and was on the point of giving it up as a sorry job when something bright caught his eye.

CHAPTER II.

PAT'S HAPPY FIND.

"Arrah!" exclaimed Pat. "Phwat is dhis me two eyes behold?"

He stooped at once and picked it up, and ran with it back to the corner, where the light was.

"A match box, Oi do belave," he said to himself, as he held it up for inspection. "And be hanged to me av it isn't solid goold, as sure as me name is Pat Mahon!"

And so it was, but not a match box.

It was a heavy, yet dainty, affair, handsomely chased, and there was something in it that made a noise when Pat shook it.

The Irish lad looked in vain for the place where it opened.

"Divil a top nor a bottom it has to it at all, at all," he said as he turned it over. "How ever did he get dhe t'ing open whin he wanted to smoke. Oi give it up."

Holding it up to the best advantage, he examined it yet more closely, and presently discovered which end was the top, by a thread-like line that marked the lid.

But that did not open it.

While he was toying with it he pressed it with his fingers in a certain way, and the lid popped up.

"Arrah! now, who dhe mischief would 'a' thought av dhat?" he cried, half aloud. "Oi press on his belly, and his hat flies off! But, sure, it is no match box, no more it is."

Something white was within.

He turned the box over, holding his hand to catch whatever might come out.

What came out were a dozen or so of visiting cards, something with which Pat had but a very slight acquaintance, and that not practical.

"He was a sassiety chap, begorra!" he exclaimed. "Let me see av Oi kin make out his name, and dhat will be a good lift on dhe road to foindin' out who he was, Oi should say. Phwat fur a name is it, onvhow? T, h, a, Thad; d, e, u, s, deus, Tha-deus—Dhe deuce, Oi guess it manes. And phwat's dhe rest av it?"

He spelled it out, as he had to do, it being a name new and strange to him, omitting a letter.

Pat could read and write a little, but no more than enough to enable him to hold his position as telegraph messenger. He had had but scant school privileges.

The name on the card was this:

THADDEUS STACKWOOD.

There was no address given, and so Happy Pat was almost as much in the dark as he had been at first.

"Well, it is something to know phwat dhe gintleman's name was, onyhaw," he reflected. "Tha-deus Stack-wood—sure it is a quare enough name, on me soul it was. Oi wonder phwere he's at now?"

He returned the cards to the case, closed the lid, and put it into his pocket, and was just turning away when he heard steps.

He looked quickly in the direction whence the sound came.

It was a policeman.

"Sure, now, and ye was wanted, ye wouldn't be widin' a t'ousand miles av here," muttered the Irish lad.

"Hold on, there," the officer called out.

"Phwat is it?" asked Pat.

"What are you doin' here at this time o' night?"

"Sure, Oi am on me way home, av it is all dhe same to ye."

"On your way home, eh?"

"Yis."

"You wasn't getting there very fast, standing here under the light. I believe you are lying to me."

"Divil a word av a loie about it, sor. Me name is Pat Mahon, and Oi live over on — strate. Sure, it is a tillygraph missinger Oi am, and Oi am jist gettin' home from me juty."

"Then what were you stopping here for?"

"Tc see phwat toime it was."

"Have you got a watch?"

"Batheration to ye! No, Oi have no watch."

"Ha! I thought so. Then just tell me how you told what time it was."

"Sure, now, don't ye know thot thrick?" Pat asked, while he was racking his brain for an explanation.

"No, I do not. I'd like you to tell me, if you can."

"How to tell dhe toime widout a watch?"

"Exactly, my fine fellow."

"Sure, ye must know me."

"I know nothing about you. Come, answer my question. How should I know you?"

"Well, everybody dhat does know me says phwat a foine fellow Oi am, and whin you said dhe same, sure, Oi t'ought ye must be acquainted wid me. How did ye know dhat about me?"

"None of your bog wit, now, or I'll have to let you feel the weight of my night stick."

"Sure, Oi am not detaining ye, am Oi?"

"I want an explanation out of you. I want to know what you were doing here when I was down there at the other corner."

"And haven't Oi tould ye?"

"Yes; a ile."

"It was dhe truth, on me soul it was."

"Then go on and tell me how you expected to tell the time with no watch to look at."

"Sure, now, are ye so ignorant dhat ye have never heard dhat whin ye can put yer fut on dhe shadow av yer head it is noon? By dhe same token, whin ye can put yer fut on dhe shadow av yer head at noight, isn't it midnight?"

"Well, you are the greatest greeny

that I ever met with. And you were trying to tell the time that way by this electric light, eh? Ha! ha! ha! What time did you make it out to be? Come, you may as well make a whole story while you are about it."

"Phwy, as Oi could shtep clean over me head Oi took it to be about three o'clock, more or less."

"Ha! ha! ha! That is about the time it is, more or less, but you never discovered it that way. You had some knowledge of it. Well, you had better move along now."

"Say, sir, you are a dacint policeman, Oi take ye to be."

"Well, whether I am or not, what of it? What have you got to say to me?"

"An' Oi ask ye a quistion, ye won't be afther thinkin' dhat Oi have wheels in me head, will ye?" Pat humbly inquired.

"That will be according to what your question is. If you have not got wheels in your head, you have got something there that is quite like a wheel, the way it runs."

"Come, come, no more nonsense; what do you want to say to me?"

"Oi want to ask ye if a man was found anyphwere near dhis corner, afther midnight, wid his head cracked."

"Not that I know of. What do you mean by such a question as that?"

"Sure, Oi mane business by it. Oi saw a chap get pasted wid a sand bag, roight furninst dhere, about twelve o'clock, and by dhe same token Oi got a dose av dhe same meself—w'u'd ye fale av dhe lump on me pate?"

Pat took off his hat and indicated the spot, and the officer put his fingers there and felt it.

"You have got a lump there, sure enough. But where have you been since that time, if you are telling me the truth?"

"And do Oi look loike a chap dhat would shtand here and tell ye a loie? Faith, dhe crack put me to slape, and it is not many minutes dhat Oi have been awake since, allanna!"

CHAPTER III.

A WARNING IS GIVEN.

Briefly, then, Pat told the officer what he had witnessed.

The policeman was surprised, for he had heard nothing about anything of the kind that night.

Pat made no mention of the gold card case to him. He wanted to keep that clew for his own efforts, if there was any mystery going to grow out of the affair.

"This has got to be looked into," said the policeman. "We'll take a look around here, and then I want you to go to the station with me."

"Count on me fur that. Oi was goin' dhere, anyhow, as soon as Oi had got me bearin's a bit. Ye see, whin Oi came to Oi was dhat dizzy Oi could hardly stand up."

Pat indicated the spot where he had seen the man struck down, and they both looked around carefully.

But there was hardly sufficient light, and the officer struck a match.

With that, a little spot of blood was found.

"Phwat did Oi tell ye?" cried Pat. "Sure, it was no loie Oi tould ye, and here is dhe proof av it."

"Here is proof of it, sure enough," the policeman agreed. "I did not think you were lying to me, for I didn't see any reason why you should."

Nothing further was to be found.

They looked well about—or the policeman did, Pat having already done so; but that was all he discovered.

"It is a mystery," the officer said. "They have either made away with the body, or the man has come to, the same as you did, and went away from here before you came to."

"He had furdher to come nor phwat Oi did."

"How was that?"

"Sure, he was half seas over whin dhey hit him dhe welt dhat sint him down loike a log."

"Maybe he has been found and taken to a hospital. There is one way to find out. Come along, and we will go to the station and there you can tell your story again."

It was not a great distance to the station.

When they entered, it was that hour of the night when every one was dozing.

The opening and closing of the door, however, roused the sergeant, and he was alert in a moment for the story Pat Mahon had to tell, as soon as the officer had given the preface.

Nothing had been heard of any such matter there, and the use of the telephone revealed that no report of anything of the kind had reached the central. But, Happy Pat was known to some of the policemen at the station, and they all put confidence in his story.

A couple of policemen were sent back to the place, to make a still more thorough examination, Pat going with them, but nothing came of it.

The Irish lad parted with them there, and started home.

He had said nothing about the card-case he had found, and he did not know whether he had done right or wrong.

Really, he could have given no very good explanation why he had not done so. He had a vague idea that he wanted to play detective a little himself in the matter.

He had, however, told his suspicion that one of the toughs who had attacked the well-dressed man had been Nig Branty, and added that perhaps the other had been Con Kellar. Of that he could not be sure, but it would not be amiss to look after them both.

Pat was about half way home, when he was suddenly set upon.

He happened to have the card-case in his hand, at the moment, carrying it thus, and his first care was for that.

Hearing a sound behind, he scented danger even before he knew danger was there, and thrust the card-case down inside his trousers belt. At the same moment he turned, and just in time to duck his head and escape a blow.

The same brace of ruffians were upon him again.

He felt a rush of air as the sand-bag passed his head, and he started to run, but the other fellow grabbed him.

He gave one cry, but the next moment both men had hold of him, and he was at a great disadvantage, and in short order they had overcome him, and were holding him fast.

"Ye will tell tales, will yer?" hissed one of them.

"He won't tell no more," grated the other.

Both were powerful men, and Pat was like a child in their combined grasp.

He struggled, but he might just as well have saved his strength, for he could do nothing, nor would they permit him to cry out.

This time he caught a good look at their faces, and their identity was no longer in question. They were the same couple again, and they were indeed Nig Branty and Con Kellar.

While Pat was still struggling, they dragged him into an alley close at hand.

"Now, mind what I say," Con Kellar hissed into his ear. "I have a knife on yer throat, and if ye holler out when I take my hand from your mouth, I will slit ye."

"Begorra, it is mesel' will never holler," the prisoner whispered, no louder than necessary.

"See that ye don't. Now, what have you been tellin' the police? No use yer denyin' it, fer we seen ye there with our own eyes. What have you been tellin'?"

"What would Oi tell thim? Dhey found me dhere, and dhey demanded to know phwat had happened, and Oi tould thim dhat some man had cut me a swipe on dhe pate."

"Did ye tell 'em it was us?"

"Begorra, Oi didn't know who it was."

"Now ye are lyin' to us."

"No, on me soul Oi am not."

"You didn't know who we were?"

"Divil a bit Oi did. It was done so quick dhat Oi couldn't see nothin' for dhe foireworks."

"But ye told them about what you'd seen—don't lie, now, fer we know ye did. Wasn't they lookin' all over the ground there, to see what they could find? Own up, now."

"Begorra, Oi had to tell, didn't Oi?"

"But you didn't tell it was us? That is the thing we want to know."

"Faith, and it is not knowin' yet who yez are, fur certain. How in dhe ould mischief could Oi tell dhem dhat?"

"Well, it wasn't us; do you understand? If you are ever brought up to say whether it was us or not, you want to swear right p'int blank that it wasn't; see?"

"Oi see, begorra, wid both eyes!"

"We know you."

"Ye know no bad av me, dhen?"

"And mightly little good, either. Do you know what I have said?"

"Sure, ye have imprissed it upon me moind hard enough, Oi should say. Oi am not loikely to forget et, Oi guess."

"See that you don't. If you do, you will go to sleep some fine dark night and never wake up again. We ain't goin' to harm you now, but we give you a fair warnin'."

"Dhe which same Oi will remimber."

"See that ye do. Now, if you are ever called on to face us and say if ye seen us this night, swear yerself black in the face that ye didn't. See? Now, git fer home, and fair warnin' what will happen if you go back on what we have told ye!"

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER MYSTERY APPEARS.

With that, the two rascals released the Irish lad.

Pat was on his feet in an instant, and in another instant out of their immediate reach.

"Sure, Oi will never squal on yez," he promised, "but how dhe merry mischief am Oi to know who ye are if Oi am ever called on to face yez, as you have tould me?"

"Sh! you fool! Hold your tongue, or some one will hear you. Don't you know us yet?"

"Divil a bit Oi do, fur how could Oi see ye in dhis dark?"

"Then what is to fear from him, pal?"

So the other inquired, in undertone, but Pat's ears were keen enough to catch it.

"I believe he is lying," said the other. "If he isn't, though, then we are safe enough, and have had our trouble for our pains. No matter; he has had fair warning."

And then to Pat:

"It is all right, anyhow Pat—you see we know you. If you don't know us, you can't swear to us, and if you do know us you had better not know us, do you see? Now, git!"

"And so ye have scared dhe daylight almost out av me all fur nothing, ye spalpeens!" Pat complained. "No matter, it is not loikely we are to come together again, Oi hope. Av coorse it wasn't you dhat laid out Mither Stackwood; Oi can swear to dhat."

Pat had been receding step by step, until there was now considerable distance between him and the two men.

When he uttered the name quoted, they both gave a snarl.

And they made a dash after the boy.

But, that was of no use. Happy Pat was swift of foot, and could hold his own against any man he had ever measured speed with.

He took to his heels and ran, the two men after him, they calling on him to stop, not loudly, but loud enough for him to hear; but he only sent them back a defiant laugh.

"We'll have ye!" they called out after him, as they gave up the race.

"Ye have no nade to," Pat called back. "Oi don't know yez, and, phwat is more, Oi don't want to, aythur."

He slackened his pace when sure that they had given it up, and continued at a slower gait, but he was watchful, and gave them no chance to come down upon him again.

"Begorra, thot was dhe shot dhat struck home, so it was!" he exclaimed to himself. "Oi know ye hard enough, ye bla'guards, and Oi know dhe man dhat ye hit on dhe head—dhat is to say, Oi know his name; and, phwat is more, Oi now know dhat you knew who he was."

Pat laughed to himself over the result of his little trick.

By calling out the name he had discovered, he had obtained unmistakable evidence that the two villains knew the man they had struck down.

That there was a mystery back of it all, needed no further evidence. What had brought the man there at that hour? Had it been a simple knock-out and robbery, or was there something more back of it?

Pat resolved that he would know more about it, if possible.

He went home and to bed.

At an early hour the next morning he was up and out, and the first thing he did was to buy a newspaper.

We have said that he could not read very well, but he knew of some one who could, and that was his Chinese friend, Fan-tan Tom, who had been a close student of the language.

He could read a great deal better than he could speak.

So, to the Chineer Pat hastened.

"Hello, Fan-tan!" he exclaimed, bouncing in on him. "Dhe top av dhe marnin' to ye!"

"Hello, Pat!" was the response. "You all light?"

"You bet Oi am."

"What you got?"

"A newspaper, begob, and Oi want ye to go t'rough it fur me and see if ye foind any minion av a missing man."

"All light, me do that, you bettee."

The Chinese took the paper, and they both sat down where the light was favorable.

"You see anything more of blame lascals?" he asked, as he ran his eyes up and down the columns, in search of a heading to indicate what was wanted.

"Bet yure swate loife Oi did!" cried

Pat, and he forthwith told what had happened after his departure from Fan-tan's humble but hospitable domicile, the Chinaman listening with the greatest interest.

"Ha! here we finde him," Fan-tan exclaimed.

"Phwat is it, Fan-tan."

"Somebody missing."

"Read it! read it!"

"No goodee; this only a woman; women no goodee."

"Read it, anyhow. Oi am interested in anything or anybody dhat is missin' jist now."

"What use? You got nothing do with this case; blame lascals had nothing to do with it, no use foolee time for nothin'."

"Well, go on."

Fan-tan passed it and searched further, but he finished the paper without coming across anything more under the required heading. And he had looked thoroughly.

"No finde him," he announced.

"Dhat is too bad, begorra."

"Maybe no in time to gettee in."

"Begob, ye have hit it! Dhat is jist it, sure. Oi was a fool to expict it."

"Allee samee, maybe be in tomolow morning. You gettee 'nothel paper and me lead him for you again. You watchee out for Nig Branty and Con Kellar, or you get it in neck."

"Bet yure pigtail dhat Oi will look out fur thim. Oi will have me two eyes open all dhe toime, you bet. But, say, Fan-tan, what about dhe woman dhat is missin'? Do ye know, dhat sort av sticks in me moind as if it has somethin' to do wid dis."

"You gottee wheels in head, Pat."

"Lucky fur me dhat Oi have got anyt'ing dhere at all, at all, after dhe swipe Oi got last noight, Oi'm tinkin'."

"How can one case have anything do with othel? You clear away off your base, Pat. But, me allee samee lead it to you, you want me to. Let me find—Here is."

"Rade it out, thin."

"Allee samee like this: 'Mysterious disappearance. A young woman lost from her home. Family and police looking everywhere for a clew to the enigma,' he read, though we drop his dialect for the moment.

"Is thot all?" asked Pat.

"No, only head lines. Here is what it say more: 'Miss Nellie Dawson, the charming and accomplished daughter of Hiram Dawson, of No. — — — avenue, has been missing from her home for a day, and no trace of her had been found up to the time of our going to press this morning. She left the house in a mysterious manner some time during the night, no one knowing where she was going. Her father has stirred up the police, and offers a handsome reward for a clew that will lead to her discovery. There was, at first, the suspicion of an elopement, but that has been disposed of. She was considered engaged to Mr. Thaddeus Stackwood—'"

"Whoop!" cried Pat, leaping up from his chair. "Phwat did Oi tell ye, Fan-tan?"

"You guesee him plenty stlaight?" asked the Chinaman.

"Bet yer loife on it!"

"Makee mystely allee samee more deep than evel, Pat. Me gittee heap in-telestet."

"Should t'ink ye would, begob, if anyt'ing would interest ye. You had better do up dhat pigtail av yures, Fan-tan, and come into dhe case wid me and help me scoop dhat reward."

"Allee samee all light; we makee team, you bettee!"

CHAPTER V.

PAT AND FAN-TAN SET OUT.

The Chinaman was interested. His little eyes flashed with the fire of eagerness.

He was a bright fellow, and Pat knew his good qualities pretty well.

Pat had once gone to his rescue when he was getting the worst of a fight, and from that time Fan-tan Tom had been his best friend.

They had quite grown to like each other, and Pat had been in the habit of spending an hour or two of a forenoon with the Chinaman now and again, having nothing to do until one o'clock.

"Here's me hand on it," said Pat. "And now, fur dhe love av goodness read dhe rest av dhat item, and let's see phwat dhere is to it."

"All light, here go the lest: 'She was considered engaged to Mr. Thaddeus Stackwood, of N. — street, but a call at that number found Mr. Stackwood at home, and he had not heard anything of the matter. He was greatly disturbed by the news, and set forth at once to lend help in the search. Nearly the whole round of the young lady's acquaintances has been made, but not one of them has any knowledge concerning her. It is the sensation of the hour.'"

There was much more, a description of the young lady, and so on; but, enough for our purpose.

"Now, phwat do ye t'ink av dhat?"

So cried Pat, when the reading ended.

"Allee samee muchee worse. Me don't know what to make of him."

"Naythur do Oi, by dhe same token. But dhere is dhe divil's own mystery back av it all, Fan-tan, and it is for us to wade in and get to dhe bottom av it."

"But how we do it, Pat?"

"Bless me av Oi know how to go to work, but it has got to be done."

"Why don't you go up to Stackwood's house and see what they have to say about it there? Allee samee do no harm."

"Oi belave ye are roight, 'begob. Will ye come along?"

"Me gottce big heap shirtee to i'on."

"Bother yer shirtees! Let yer pardner do dhe work, and you come along wid me. Two heads are beither nor wan, aven av wan is a head av cabbage."

"Well, all light, if you be no ashamed to bee seen on stleet with me."

"Phwy should Oi be ashamed av ye?"

"Maybe small boys take me to be your father—hi-yi!"

"Dhen, begorra, Oi will set dhem roight by telling them Oi am yure uncle, by the same token."

Fan-tan Tom laughed, wound up his pigtail and put on his hat, and was ready for the street, and the two set forth together.

They talked the matter over as they went along, but could make nothing out of the tangle, and in due time they came to the Stackwood residence, and Pat rang the bell.

A servant opened the door.

"Anybody at home?" asked Pat, in a business-like way.

The girl looked first at him and then at the Chinaman, and was unable to answer for surprise.

"Take yure toime about it," said Pat.

"We are in no hurry, miss."

"Who—who did you want to see?" the girl managed to inquire.

"Well, is Mr. Tha-deus Stack-wood at home?"

"Mr. Thaddeus Stackwood, you mean? No, sir, he is not."

"Tha-deus! Excuse me fur me profanity. Oi didn't expict Oi would foind him at home."

"Then why did you ask?"

"Allee samee, we want to see somebody," chipped in Fan-tan.

"That is it," supported Pat. "We want to see somebody—somebody bad, you understand."

"Nobody bad lives here," said the girl.

"Don't go to git funny, now," Happy Pat reproved. "Who is at home, thin?"

"Mr. Sinclair Stackwood is at home."

"Who is he?"

"A brother to Mr. Thaddeus."

"Oh-ho! He is dhe spalpeen we want, then, begorra."

The girl had to laugh in spite of herself, for Pat's earnestness only made him the more comical in her eyes.

"What name shall I say?" she asked.

"Tell him it is Happy Pat Mahon, begob!"

"And who is he?" indicating the Chinaman.

"Sure, now, and you will name him Oi will give him to ye," said Pat, with a comical grin.

"My name allee samee Tom Kee Hop," spoke up the Chinese, gravely.

"Otherwise, Fan-tan Tom fur short," said Pat.

The girl laughed, said she would announce them, and asked them to wait just outside until she returned; and she closed the door on them and left them out on the stoop.

"That is nate, on me word," muttered Pat.

"Allee samee think we come to stealee," said Fan-tan.

"Dhat is because you are wid me, Tom. She don't go much on dhat mug av yures."

"Bettee lifee it was your face done it. Me alle samee go to Sunday school, sit in flont row; you takee flont row in plison some day, bettee."

"Along wid you, hey? Mebby so."

Thus they chaffed each other while they waited for the return of the servant, who came after a few minutes' delay.

"Well, phwhat's dhe word?" asked Pat.

"He does not know you, and says he can't be bothered with you. You are to go away."

She was about to close the door, but Pat put his foot in the way while he spoke rapidly.

"But he must see us," he said. "Sure, it is important news we bring, and we have got to see somebody, begob."

At that instant a step was heard in the hall, and the girl looked over her shoulder and quickly stepped back out of the way, and a man appeared.

He was tall and dark, with a sinister expression.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"What do you want?"

"Did ye ever see dhis before?" asked Pat.

He took the gold card case from his pocket and held it up.

At sight of it the man slightly paled, and he stepped forward and put out his hand.

"Where did you get that?" he asked.

"Found it where it was lost, sor," said Pat.

"Ah! I see. You found it, and the cards told you where to find the owner. I see, I see. You have come for a reward—yes, yes. But my brother is not at home this morning. If you will leave your name—"

"Beggorra, Oi can't leave me name; Oi have use fur it. But dhat is not all av me story, sor; yure brother is not loike-ly to come home in a hurry, av dhe welt

he got on dhe head was as hard as Oi think it was, and av you want to foind him ye had betther—"

The man had paled again, and he quickly interrupted:

"Come in, come in. I believe that you have something more important than I imagined. Come right in here," leading the way into a small office-like room on the right of the hall.

Pat and Fan-tan followed him in.

CHAPTER VI.

FAN-TAN SCENTS DANGER AHEAD.

The dark man motioned them to be seated on a settee, and when he had closed the door he sat down on a chair by a desk.

He looked at the peculiar pards for a few seconds without speaking, and his face seemed to grow darker all the time. Pat felt a sort of chill steal down his back.

"Now, then, what do you know?" the man demanded.

"Beggorra, it is phwat Oi don't know dhat Oi want to know."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oi mane phwat Oi say."

"I know what you say, but I don't know what you are talking about."

"Thin Oi must thry to make ye on-derstand phwat Oi am talking about, Oi suppose. Did dhat goold box belong to yure brother?"

"It did."

The man had taken the box and was toying with it in his fingers.

"Good enough. You wanted to know pwhat Oi know, and now Oi will tell ye. Last noight about midnight Oi saw two bla'guards strike a gentleman on dhe head wid a sand bag and lay him out fur fair. Oi was goin' to holler murther, but Oi got a dose av dhe same medicine mesel', and dhat was the last Oi knowed."

"Is it possible!"

"Ye would have thought it was if ye had been in my place, sor. Well, me friend here come along later and gathered me up and took me home wid him, and whin Oi came to Oi wint to look fur dhe man and tell dhe police. Dhe man was gone, but Oi found dhat box on the ground phwere he had dropped, and by it Oi knowed who he was."

"Wonderful! I must see the police at once."

"Oi should say ye must, sor. And, av ye want to know dhe names av dhe two spalpeens dhat done dhe thrick, Oi can tell ye. Dhey was Con Kellar and Nig Branty, two av dhe worst thugs in all Gotham, on me word. Sure, av they knowed Oi had given thim away dhey would cut me heart out, dhat bad dhey are; so, fur dhe love av goodness, don't ye go fur to give me and me Chinees chum away in dhe matther, will ye?"

"Of course I will not give you away, as you call it. I am glad you have told me. If what you say is true—"

"Thru as gospel, every word av it, sor."

"Then my brother has met with foul play, somehow, and I must see where and how and why."

"Dhere is a mystery about it all, sor. Dhe two gossoons knowed who he was, and it is as maybe as not dhat some divil's imp employed thim to put him out av dhe way."

"You say they knew him?"

"Yes."

"How do you know that?"

Pat explained the trick he had played to gain the point.

"That was clever, truly. But perhaps they learned his name from something he had in his pocket."

"Allanna! but Oi never thought av dhat. Maybe dhey did. But, anyhow, it was dhem dhat gave him his dose, and he wint to slape. Av ye want to foind him, all ye have got to do is hunt up Kellar and Branty."

"Have you told the police?"

"Yis."

"The whole story?"

"Yis, all but about dhe goold box."

"Ah! then they do not know who the man was yet?"

"Not a bit, sor."

"How is it that you did not tell them that?"

"Well, you see, sor. Oi thought Oi would come here and see about it first. If dhe man had got here, maybe he wouldn't want his name to get in dhe papers, and maybe he would pay us somet'ing fur holdin' our tongues. Dhen, av he hadn't got here, maybe you would pay us somet'ing fur dhe clue—see?"

"Yes, I see. Very thoughtful of you. Here—here is ten dollars for you. Divide it between you, and—and hold your tongues."

He handed Pat a crisp bill as he spoke.

"Thanky, sor," said the Irish lad, politely.

"But, allee samee, what is it you no want us to tell?" chipped in Fan-tan Tom.

"What do I want you not to tell?"

"Yep."

"Why—why— That is, do not mention my brother's name, so that it will get into the papers, if you can help it. Leave it all to me, now that you have done your part."

"All light."

"But, sor, can't we do somethin' toward helpin' foind him?" queried Pat.

"No, no. What could you do? Leave it all to me and the police now. You have done nobly, and you should not run the risk of getting those two fellows down on you."

"Begorra, it is little we have to fear from thim."

"How is that?"

"Sure, won't dhe police have dhem before dhe day is done?"

"Ha! sure enough. But, no, there is nothing you can do, so do not interest yourselves in the matter any further. I will go to the police immediately."

He rose as he spoke.

The odd pards did the same.

"By the way, where do you live?" the man inquired. "If you are wanted I will know where to find you."

Pat answered that question, and with some passing remarks, thanking them again for their trouble, the man showed them to the door and out, closing the door upon them sharply.

"Begorra! he naden't cut our heels off wid dhe dure," said Pat.

"Him no goodee?" said Fan-tan Tom.

"No good?"

"Not a bit, you bettee."

"He was good fur this tenner, anyhow, begob!"

"But him allee samee had bad eye. We got look out for him, Happy."

"Sure, now, it is a mare's nest ye have found, Chinaman."

"Allee samee him no goodee, you see."

"Well, dhat is none av our funeral, is it? We have got foive good dollars apiece out av him, so we naydn't kick."

"You no wantee forgettee to give me half."

"Kape yure eye on me, Fan-tan."

"You bettee."

"Well, phwere to now? Oi suppose me may as well go home— But, hould on!"

"What is matter now?"

"Dhere is dhe other ind av dhe string to be looked afther. Maybe we can scoop another tenner."

"No lettee him slip, then."

"Ye remimber phwat ye read in dhe paper about dhe young lady dhat was missin'?"

"Allee samee."

"Well, suppose we go dhere and foind out more about dhat, and tell 'em phwat has happened to Mr. Stackwood. Mobby it will be a clew to dhe foindin' av dhe gurrel."

"Mebby sure enough."

"Come on, dhen. Begorra, maybe thim two divils had a hand in both av dhe games, and av we kin foind dhe lady and win dhe reward—sure, Oi belave Oi will report sick and take a day off, and see phwat can be done in dhe way av playin' detective."

"All light, me allee samee with you, clear up to chin, you bettee."

That point settled, they set out for the Dawson residence, chatting away about the matter as they went.

They little imagined the complications that were arising, or the terrible dangers into which they were threading their way. Had they known, perhaps they would have dropped quietly out—but they had already gone too far for that.

CHAPTER VII.

SURPRISE UPON SURPRISE.

Arriving at their destination, Pat pulled the bell as before.

This time it was a man-servant who opened the door to them, instead of a maid.

He was a pompous-looking fellow in livery, with every button polished "to the queen's taste."

He looked at them with a scowl.

"Is Mr. Dawson at home?" asked Happy Pat.

"What do you want with Mr. Dawson," with much emphasis on the "you."

"Dhat is his business and mine. Is Mr. Dawson at home? Answer me thot."

The butler puffed up like a turkey cock, and grew very red in the face, looking as if he would like to take Happy Pat by the neck.

"What is your name?" he demanded. "I will see whether he is at home—to you—or not."

"Sure, me name is Pat Mahon, and dhis Frinch gintleman wid me is Chinese Ambassydur to Paradise Park—Tom Kee Hop by name."

As he said it he gave a bow and a sweep of the hand in the direction of Fan-tan Tom, who placed his hand on his breast and bowed low before the functionary at the door.

The butler hardly knew what to make of this.

He looked from one to the other.

Fan-tan Tom was well dressed—he was something of a dude among his Chinese fellowmen, and his satin blouse shone resplendent in the sunshine.

"Well, step in and I will announce you," said the butler.

Happy Pat stepped aside and took off his hat to Fan-tan, bowing and inviting him to proceed.

"Go ahead, yure excellency," he said, with mock gravity. "Sure, it is not fur dhe loikes av me to take presaydance above ye. Oi will attind ye, and lift dhe hem av yure royal garment."

It was all Fan-tan could do to keep his face straight.

They entered, and the butler, inviting them to be seated upon a settee in the hall, disappeared.

Pat and Fan-tan looked at each other and grinned from ear to ear, and the Chinaman shook his fist at Pat in a way that meant a day of reckoning for him.

In a moment the butler returned.

"Mr. Dawson will see you," he said stiffly. "This way."

They followed him down the hall, and he bowed them into the library, where a gentleman was seated.

Here, again, Pat bowed low before the Chinaman, for the benefit of the gaping butler, and Fan-tan Tom was obliged to precede him into the room.

Even the gentleman rose to his feet, seeing such obeisance made, and, taking in the fact that the Chinaman was well dressed in rich native costume, and Fan-tan salaamed.

"Whom have I the honor to receive?" the gentleman asked.

"Name allee samee Tom Kee Hop," said the Chinaman, gravely. "We learn by paper you have lost daughter; we maybe bling news of her."

A cloud came over the gentleman's face immediately.

"Close the door, James," he said to the butler, rather severely, that factotum having lingered to gratify his curiosity; and James disappeared forthwith and closed it promptly.

The gentleman resumed his seat.

He had by this time "sized up" his callers, as the phrase has it, and he let them stand.

"Now what do you know about my daughter?" he demanded.

"Allee samee not muchee, yet maybe good deal. My flend speakee heap bettel English; he tellee you."

"Begorra, Oi won't say how much better English Oi can speak," said Pat, "but Oi will get dhere a hape quicker. Oi fancy. Sure, sor, Oi belave we have a clew fur ye."

"How came you to know anything about the matter?"

"By dhe newspapers, sor."

"Hang the newspapers! They are a mighty sight too meddlesome in private affairs."

The partners could not but look at each other in surprise, on hearing this. It did not seem as if Mr. Dawson was very anxious about his daughter, after all.

"You are Mr. Dawson, sor?" asked Pat.

"Yes."

"And dhe missing young lady is yure daughter?"

"She is."

"Dhen maybe ye have found her."

"What is it to you whether she has or has not been found?"

"Begorra, it is a strange father ye are, is all Oi have to say, and ye don't care whether she is found or not."

Mr. Dawson's manner changed instantly.

"It is not that," he said quickly.

"What can two such fellows as you hope to do for me?"

"It is said dhat ye have offered a reward, sor, and, sure, we thought maybe we moight scoop in a slice av it, wid the infurmation we have, is all."

"I see, I see. Well, what information do you bring? It cannot possibly be anything of moment, when all the police are searching for her, and private detectives as well. But let me hear."

Thereupon Pat told his story.

Mr. Dawson listened attentively.

He pulled at his mustache at times, and moved in his chair, but he did not say a word.

"Dhere ye have it, sor," said Pat, in conclusion.

"This is a strange matter, a very strange matter," the gentleman mused. "You say you have told Sinclair Stackwood?"

"Yis, sor."

"And what did he say?"

"Sure, he gave us ten dollars, and tould us to hould our whist."

"Told you to keep still about it, eh? That is very strange, it seems to me. Why did he want it kept still?"

"Sure, he said we had done our part, and he would do dhe rest. He was going to dhe police about it, and tould us dhere was no nade fur us to go gettin' ourselves into danger."

"What danger?"

"Phwy, from thim two murtherin' villains phwat laid his brother out."

"Oh! yes, I see, I see. Well, he was no doubt right in that. You had better not trouble your heads about it further, I think."

"But, sure, we are on dhe trail fur dhat reward ye offer, sor."

"You can not hope to win that. That is for the police or a detective. Here, I will give you ten dollars more," taking money from his pocket, "and you just let the business drop."

This was adding surprise to surprise.

Pat and Fan-tan looked at each other in astonishment.

The man held out the money to Pat, who took it without any hesitancy, but it was a moment before the Irish lad could offer response.

"Well, Oi suppose it is all roight, and none av our business, but it is dhe quarrest business dhat Oi ever stumbled into in all me days, and dhat Oi'm saying."

"Never mind, never mind," said the man, waving his hand. "You have done your part, and I am greatly obliged to you. Take the money and welcome, and dismiss the matter from your mind. Do not meddle any further with it. The police can attend to it."

"But, about dhe reward—"

"Never mind the reward; be satisfied with what you have got."

He tapped a bell and the butler appeared. He was directed to show the peculiar pards out, and, their interview at an end, there was nothing they could do but retire.

For the benefit of the butler in the buttons Pat bowed low before Fan-tan Tom, waving him to precede, and thus they took their departure.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAPPY PAT IN LIMBO.

The door closed after them with a suggestive bang.

Pat descended the steps with dignity, while Fan-tan trotted after him.

They walked to the nearest corner without speaking—in fact, without looking at each other. They turned the corner, and then they stopped and faced each other.

"Fan-tan," said Pat, soberly, "Oi have wan quistion to ask ye."

"What is that?" inquired the Celestial. "Me allee samee have one question to ask you."

"Is me head on me shoulders?"

"Allee samee him there. What for you ask such fool question as that?"

"Begorra, Oi didn't know phwether it was dhere or not. Sure, it must be as impty as a gourd."

"You tellee me what mean."

"Oi thought Oi had some brains, or somethin' dhat answered dhe purpose av dhe real article, but Oi am blist av Oi belave Oi have wan pinnyweight at all, at all. By dhe same token, phwat was yure quistion?"

"Hi-yi! Me no forgettee him, you bettee. Me want to know which one of them ten-dollal bills me to have."

"Bless yure ould heart, Fan-tan, ye may take yure choice av thim."

Pat produced them both, and his partner took one.

"Allee samee him do," he said.

"And little good it will do ye. Sure, ye will blow it all in at fan-tan before dhe clock strikes twelve to-night. Dhat is no funeral av mine, however. Oi want to know phwat ye think av all dhis mystery."

"Allee samee too much for Tom."

"And it is too much for me, too, begorra. Dhat is dhe reason Oi think Oi must have lost dhe little sinse Oi ever had. But, come along, and let's move as we talk. Oi have got to sind word dhat Oi am sick, ye know, so that Oi can be off juty dhe day."

"Hi! Then you no givee up?"

"Nary a givee up, you bet! Oi am onto dhis thing now loike a ton av bricks."

"What you going to do?"

"Divil a wan av me knows, Fan-tan, but Oi can never know peace nor rest now until dhe mystery is cleared up and dhe tangle straightened out. Oi am dhat crazy."

"Allee samee that no news."

"Don't be afther thrying to joke wid me now, Fan-tan, an' ye love me. Me head is dhat swimmin' wid bewildermint dhat Oi am as loike as not to be afther pastin' ye wan in dhe eye, Tommy, takin' ye fur some one else. A man's brother has been kilted, and he don't care; another man's daughter has been lost, and he don't want to find her. Phwat does it mane, allanna?"

They tried to reason it out as they walked along, but failed utterly, and the more they talked it over the more their curiosity was awakened.

In due course they reached Fan-tan's place of business, and Happy Pat went in to finish the discussion.

"Oi tell ye phwat it is, Fan-tan."

"All light, tell me."

"Oi will go to dhe police wid dhe whole matther, soon as Oi have gone home and sint dhe word dhat Oi am sick and can't go to the office dhe day; and let dhem tackle it."

"Allee samee all light, you bettee."

"Then if there is any crooked work, as you seem to think dhere is, by dhe powers, some wan will git into trouble!"

"Goodee plan, Pat. Allee samee, we stand ahead of game so far, twenty dollals to goodee, you bette. All light, you go home, gittee dinner, then come back and we go for game bald headed."

So they parted, and Pat went home.

He sent word by one of his sisters, a girl two or three years younger than himself, that he could not go to the office, and as he was a faithful messenger and liked, his excuse was accepted.

Shortly after dinner he left the house and bent his steps in the direction of Fan-tan's domicile.

This took him in the same direction as if he had been going to the telegraph office, for a distance, and he went ahead at a good pace, paying no attention to anything.

Pat was a street boy—had been on the streets ever since he had been old enough to toddle—and could have found his way anywhere in that neighborhood blindfolded.

When in a hurry it was his custom, in the daytime, to take a short cut through a rather forbidding alley.

He never ventured into it by night.

In a hurry now, he turned into the

alley when he came to it, and hastened on.

There had been two women standing at the corner as he came down the street, who had parted to let him enter the alley, and no sooner had he gone in than they followed him.

He had seen them, but had given them no thought or attention.

The next he knew he was in their grasp, a dirty apron was wound around his head, and in about two seconds of time he was whisked in through a doorway.

He offered fight, naturally, but the women were large and strong, and they had him at a disadvantage. He did not know what it meant; it was the strangest experience of his life.

But he did not long remain in doubt.

Other and stronger hands were soon laid upon him, he was dragged along a hall and down a flight of stairs.

The apron was still around his head, and a hand pressing it close over his mouth made it not only impossible for him to cry out, but difficult for him to get his breath.

"Well, we have got ye, have we?" a voice demanded.

He knew the voice.

It was that of Con Kellar.

"And we'll keep ye, too," hissed another voice, that of Nig Branty.

One of them had a hand at his throat, and the foul apron was now removed from around his head.

"Don't ye yaup," warned Kellar, "or I'll press these knuckles of mine into yer neck till I shut off yer wind so's you won't never find it again."

Pat tried to take a view of his surroundings.

He was in semi-darkness; it was a damp hole, and the smell that greeted him was not wholesome.

"We had better slit his wheezer and done with it," suggested the half-blood, for such Nig Branty was—half negro and half white, while at the same time whole villain.

"No, no; it won't do," said Kellar.

"Why not?"

"You know well enough."

"Jist because we promised de women we wouldn't, if dey would gobble him for us—so!"

"That is one reason, but the bigger reason is that it was daylight, and it will be funny if somebody didn't see them take him in. No, we won't kill him—not yet, anyhow."

"What then?"

"We'll fix him so's he will keep all right."

"Well, jes' as you say, Con; but he'd orter be killed fer goin' back on us dat way."

"Never mind. You bind his feet while I hold him this way, and then we will bind his hands. You are here to stay, you imp of Satan; do you understand it?"

"Sure, and ye make me late fur juty Oi will lose me job, so Oi will," Pat complained.

"To sulphur with yer job! What do we keer?"

CHAPTER IX.

PLAYING A GAME OF WITS.

At first Pat had fully believed that his life was at stake immediately.

Even as it was, it was only a respite. He felt that he was in a situation from which he would never escape.

What was he, a street boy of the great metropolis? He would not be missed outside of his own family, any more than one of the rats that undoubtedly

inhabited the cellar in which he found himself.

If Fan-tan only knew of his predicament—

But what was the use of wishing that? He would have to make the best of it, and "grin and bear it."

Nig Branty was not long in binding his feet, and that done, the same favor was accorded his hands, and he was rendered utterly powerless to help himself in any way whatever.

"Now, then, soon's we've gagged him he will do," said Kellar. "But I want to talk with him a minute before we do that."

"Well, don't be long at it," said Nig.

"Boy, do you know your life is in danger?" Kellar demanded.

"Oi suppose it is, but pwhat av it? Av Oi lose me job Oi must starve anyhow."

"You will starve all the sooner here. That is to say, if the rats don't get in their fine work on ye first, which it is likely they will. This is what ye git fur goin' back on us."

"Who has gone back on ye?"

"You have."

"Nobody has asked me av it was you dhat hit dhe feller on dhe head."

"No matter; you have been running around, and no doubt you have been tellin' all you know. You hadn't sense enough to keep your head shut and 'tend to your own business."

"How do you know?"

"Don't you suppose we have had our eyes on you?"

"Prove it."

"What is the use? We know, and we made up our minds to do fur ye. I guess you will believe it before you get out of here."

"Sure, it is lying to me ye are. It is only scared ye are dhat Oi will tell something, and ye have laid fur me as Oi was goin' to me work, to stop me tongue."

"That is jist what we are going to do; you have said it."

"But it is widout rayson."

"Now, see here, Irish; you have been runnin' around with that Chineese pal of yours—we have seen ye, understand. You have been to a certain house up town, and you went there on purpose to blab on us—no need to deny it, fur ye had no other errand there."

"Kin ye prove dhat same?"

"We don't have to; we take ye on suspicion of it."

Pat was a lad of keen wit.

He believed that he could learn something of interest to himself, if he could only get them to talk long enough.

"Sure, dhat is a dead wrong. Is it roight to hang a man before he has been thried, Oi would be askin' av ye? Sure, it is no fair dale ye are givin' me."

"Why not tell him right out?" suggested Nig. "He won't never git out of here to blab—"

"Not on yer life!" cried Con. "You hold your tongue, too."

"Phwy not tell me all, is it?" queried Pat. "Sure, thin, it is something ye are kaping back."

"Don't let it bother you. You know that what I have said is so, and we know it is so, and that is all there is about it. You are here, and that is all we care about."

"But, ye say dhat Oi have been to a house, do ye?"

"That is what I said."

"Well, phwat more did ye see afther dhat?"

"Enough to satisfy us that you wasn't dealin' square with us, be sure of that."

"Dhat don't answer dhe quistion. Av

ye are goin' to lave me here, sure Oi have dhe roight to know phwat it is fur. Oi have done nothin' to yez—"

"Bah! what a liar! Maybe you will deny that ye hollered a name at us last night. It was to the house of that same party that ye went, and no doubt to tell on us, and what ye had seen."

Pat was thinking rapidly. He wanted to entrap them into saying something that would reveal to him just how much or how little they really knew.

"And phwat of dhat? Sure, dhat is no proof dhat Oi have been blowing out on yez, is it?"

"We ain't waitin' fur proof, we are takin' ye on 'spicion."

"Well, and ye folleyed me, did ye?"

"I said so."

"Well, dhen ye know dhat Oi came from dhere straight home, and had me dinner and was goin' to work, don't ye?"

"Yes—that is to say, it don't matter what you did after that, we had the dead-wood on ye fur goin' there. I want to know what you was goin' to do next, if we hadn't stopped ye?"

"Well, now, an' ye had folleyed me furdher ye would have found out. Ye have spoiled dhe foineest chance ye ever had in yure loives, so ye have. But, ye pair av bla'guards, ye, it is not folleyin' me at all ye have been doin', no more ye did."

The two fellows looked at each other quickly.

Pat was sure then that his suspicion was right. He did not believe they had followed him.

If that had been the case, why no mention of his calling at the house of the Dawsons immediately after leaving Stackwood's? And then a sudden idea came to him.

He was on the point of letting it out but he checked himself in time.

"What is that you say?" demanded Kellar.

"Oi said it."

"But, ain't here the proof that we did follow you, hang you! What did we nab you for, else?"

Pat would have liked to tell them the real reason, for he believed he had solved it, but he was prudent and tempered his rejoinder to suit the occasion, saying:

"As Oi tould ye, because ye are a pair av cowards, and was afraid dhat Oi would blow out on yez."

"We know dhat you have done dat, a'ready," growled Branty.

"You hold your jaw, will ye!" cried Kellar.

"Well, we do know it."

"Confound you! When will you learn sense? Didn't I tell you that I would do the talking here?"

"Well, go ahead, but if it was me I'd end it mighty quick, I tell ye."

The other got up and walked away to the steps.

"Now, see here, boy," hissed Kellar then: "Your life ain't worth a cent, do you understand that?"

"Sure, Oi could have tould ye dhat same," agreed Pat.

"We are onto you, and that Chineese pal of yours. We are goin' fer him soon's we git the chance and he will fare worse 'n what you have I'm tellin' ye. But, answer me this:"

"Phwat is it?"

"Have you told any one else besides the folks at Stackwood's?"

"By dhe same token it is not admitting Oi am dhat Oi have tould any wan dhere. Sure, it is you dhat's makin' all dhe fuss, and not mesel'."

At that moment a whistle was heard at the top of the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

POLICEMEN DECEIVED.

Instantly Con Kellar clapped his hand over Pat's mouth.

"Don't you so much as try to peep!" he gave warning. "If ye do, by the great, I'll strangle ye!"

There was no chance for Pat to make any outcry, even had he dared, for he was held too securely. And a gag was hastily formed and thrust into his mouth a moment later.

"What kin it mean?" queried Nig Branty.

"I give it up," whispered Con. "We had better keep shady."

"Where shall we put this feller?"

"We'll dump him back here in the corner. Ketch holt."

Together they lifted their prisoner and bore him to the rear part of the darksome hole.

When they stopped they gave him a swing and a toss, and terror seized Happy Pat's heart for a moment, for he had heard of persons being thrown into horrible holes.

He was not long in transit, however.

Only a moment, and then he fell upon a heap of rags and rubbish.

He heard the two men move away in the darkness immediately, for it was dark in that corner, and he saw their forms in outline when they came into the semi-light at the foot of the stairs.

Just then heavy steps were heard above.

"I tell ye, it is no sich thing!" cried a woman's harsh voice.

She lies the hussy! another voice added. "We have done no such a thing at all copper."

"Yes, they did, too," piped a voice in a higher key, also a female's. "I seen thim wid my own eyes. They dragged him right into this very door, so they did and they are lying."

Pat recognized that voice.

It was that of his sister, who had gone with his message to the office where he was employed.

"We'll have to see about it," spoke a man's voice. "You had better own up, women, for it will be the easier for you if you do. What have you done with him?"

"She lies!" one of the voices screamed. "Oh! I could tear out your two eyes, you hussy!"

"I don't lie," the girl persisted. "I want you to find him, copper."

The shadowy forms at the foot of the stairs had now vanished, as Happy Pat could see. The whistle had given them th warning.

The footsteps sounded along the hall, and by the number of them Pat rightly guessed that there were two policemen with his sister—not likely that one would venture into such a crib alone.

The voices of the two women kept up an angry babel.

Suddenly Pat felt heavy hands seize him, and he was pulled down into something of a hollow in the heap of rags.

The next instant the two men who had captured him—as he rightly surmised, tumbled into the hole with him, and the rags were pulled hastily down to cover them.

Pat believed that he would surely smother and strangle.

"You say he is not here, do you?" demanded one of the policemen, at the top of the stairs.

"Of course we say it!" cried the women together.

"Well, then, you can't object to our going down cellar to look around. Get me a lamp, one of you."

"But what is the use—"

"Get a light, I tell you!"

There was muttering and grumbling, and one of the women moved away to obey the order.

"Please don't believe them and let them fool you," Pat heard his sister plead. "I know he is here somewhere. Do you think I would run to you wid a lie in my mout'?"

"We'll soon see," was the answer.

"She does lie!" cried the woman remaining. "She has a grudge ag'in us, so she has."

And so they kept it up, and it seemed to Pat as if the light would never be brought, but presently other steps were heard again, and then he heard them descend.

The two rascals were lying close to Pat—almost upon him, in fact, and one had hold of his throat.

"Don't you move when they come here," that one hissed into his ear. "If you do, I'll slip a knife in between your ribs before you know what has happened. Take warnin'."

Pat knew that he would have to obey.

He did not dare take the risk of trying to move, and it was doubtful if he could have moved sufficiently to attract attention anyhow.

The policemen and the others came down the steps, and the prisoner was just able to catch a faint glimmer of light through the covering of rags that was over him and his enemies.

He did not believe that they would be discovered.

There were not a few rags only, but tons of them in the heap, and they were covered probably two or three feet thick.

Pat could see the light moving about the cellar, a gleam now and then coming through a chink in the rag heap, and he could hear most of what was being said.

"I tell ye ye won't find him here," one of the women declared, as they came near the heap. "Ye had better run the young' winch in herself."

"Of course he is not here, ye can see for yourselves," the other lent support.

"It does not look so, that is the fact," agreed one of the policemen.

"But he is somewheres in the house," cried Pat's sister.

"You are welcome to search it from top to bottom, coppers," one of the women invited.

"And then hang us both if ye find him," said the other. "What the lying hussy ever said it for is more than I can see. Oh! you bold thing!"

"Are you sure you ain't mistaken?" demanded one officer.

"No, no, there is no mistake about it," urged the girl.

"Well, it is mighty strange, then. You can see for yourself that he is not here."

"But he is somewheres in the house. Oh, I know he is somewheres in the house, policemen. Please help me find him, and get him out, won't ye?"

They had now passed the heap of rags.

"Well, we will go through the house with you, if it will do you any good."

"Yes, yes, please do that, for we are sure to find him. I would never tell ye a lie about it, no more I would. He is my brother, and I must find him, if I have to do it alone."

"Well, come on, for he isn't down here."

They moved on, and in a few minutes more their feet were heard on the stairs.

They went up, and the door at the top was heard to close after them as they passed out, and then their steps resounded overhead.

It took but a moment, then, for the

two knaves to shake themselves out of the rags. They were half smothered, apparently, the same as Pat, and were glad to get a breath of the comparatively fresh air.

"You done well, boy, ter lay still," said one of the men. "I was ready to jam ye."

"And what better place do we want fer him?" the other demanded. "We can bury him deep in the rags, and it would take a terrier to find him under them all. Let's bury him."

Accordingly they did, until Pat thought he would die of suffocation.

Thus they left him, and he heard them no more for awhile.

CHAPTER XI.

RESCUE AND ESCAPE.

Pat now felt despondent.

He listened for the heavy tread of the policemen, and presently heard their footsteps again when they came down from the upper parts of the house.

There was more talk in the hall, the two women—and now more with them—denouncing the girl, and she crying and still adhering tenaciously to the story she had told at first.

But they went away, and she with the policemen, for it would have been dangerous for her to remain.

Then presently the whistle was heard, as once before.

Immediately the door at the top of the steps opened and closed, men's steps were heard, and after that only the ordinary sounds of the house came to the prisoner's ears.

Happy Pat was in a bad fix.

Tied hands and feet, gagged, and buried under the heap of rags.

He had remained still until he could stand it no longer, and now he must make a fight for air if he could get it, or suffocate.

So he commenced to wriggle and squirm, trying to worm his way out of the heap. He was able to make enough progress to encourage him to keep on, and at last he got his head out.

That was enough for the present. What he had wanted was air, and, having got that, he was content to rest himself.

Some time passed, and no one came into the cellar.

When he had rested, he tried to get his hands or feet loose, but it was useless to try. He had read of boys in a similar fix who had managed to free themselves in one way or another, but he now doubted the truth of such stories. It was more than he could do.

So passed the afternoon, and night came, and the cellar became entirely dark.

Pat was by this time in a fever.

It would have been a relief, almost, if his foes had put in their appearance again.

Presently he thought he heard the click of the latch of the door at the top of the stairs. He listened attentively, and the next sound was a creak of a step.

Some one was coming.

He listened attentively, but heard nothing more for a time. Then he saw the sudden blaze of a match in the darkness.

It revealed a girl, and she was lighting a candle. Having done that, she turned her face toward him, and he saw it was his sister. He felt as if he would like to shout, if he could.

He thought of groaning, so that she would hear him, but fearing that he might needlessly frighten her, he did not do so, but waited.

When she had got the candle to burning brightly, she advanced straight toward him.

Pat lay still and kept silent, and watched.

She came on, looking this way and that, while she sheltered the tiny flame of the candle with her hand.

Presently her eyes fell on him, and she stopped short. That for a moment only, and then she ran forward to where he lay, with a half sob choking her as she cried in a whisper:

"I knowed ye wur here, Pat, I knowed ye wur!"

As quickly as she could with one hand, holding the candle in the other, she untied the gag and removed it.

Happy Pat's jaw was so stiff that he could hardly close his mouth, and he made several efforts before he could speak.

"It is a jewel ye are, Kathy!" were his first words. "Sure, and had it not been fur ye, Oi moight lay here till Oi died."

"I was not goin' to leave ye here, Pat, if I could find ye at all, at all."

"Sure ye wouldn't, swate wan."

"You see, I did not dare come back while it was light, but when it got dark I came and sneaked into the house, and here I am."

"And thank God fur it," said Pat, fervently. "But, put yure hand in me pocket, swate wan, and get me knife and cut dhese strings dhat are houldin' av me fast, wud ye?"

She proceeded promptly to obey.

The knife was soon found and opened, and in a few moments more Pat was free.

"Dhey shall pay fur dhis, dhe spal-peens!" cried Pat, as he got up and stretched himself. "Sure, av Oi meant business before, Oi mane it all dhe more now, by me soul."

"We must get out of here, Pat, and then you must come straight home."

"Home, is it?"

"Yes."

"Not a bit av it, not yet."

"But, mother is that worried about ye, Pat, darlint."

"No matther, you can tell her dhat Oi am on me two pins and kickin' all roight."

"But where are you going?"

"Phwere am Oi going? Phwere would Oi be going, but to look fur Fan-tan."

By the way, Pat had told his sister all about the mystery, at dinner that day, so she could readily grasp what further he had to say now, in the same connection.

"Fan-tan?" she repeated.

"Yis, av coorse. Dhe two murtherin' gossoons said dhey wur goin' to do fur him, so they did."

"Mercy on us! But can't I be of some help to you, Pat? Maybe you will only run into more dangers, and will get into a worse trouble nor what this wan was."

"No, no, yure place is at home, afther noight, swate Kathy."

"Well, we must get out av here."

"Yis, yis, so we must."

They moved toward the stairs, taking care not to make a noise.

At the bottom of the steps they stopped and listened, and hearing nothing but the ordinary sounds of the house, ventured up.

When they came to the landing at the top, Pat blew out the light, and they waited a few seconds before opening the door. Hearing nothing to make them hesitate longer, Pat turned the knob.

He opened the door, and they stepped forth into the lighted hall.

It was not very light, having only one lamp, and that a dirty affair, but it was plenty light enough for them to see and be seen.

No one was there, as it happened, at that moment, and they made a dash for the front door, but before they reached it the door opened, and one of the women who had captured Pat stepped in.

She was a big woman, fat and heavy, and at sight of Pat and the girl she stopped short and voiced a scream.

It was instantly responded to further back in the hall.

There was the other virago!

"Clear dhe road!" cried Pat, with vigor. "Begorra, an ye don't, ye must take the consequences!"

Taking hold of his sister's hand he ran straight on, and the woman stopping squarely in his path, there could not help being a collision, and it is a known law of physics that the object struck gets the worst of the contact.

Luckily, the woman had not closed the door after her, being too greatly surprised on seeing Pat and his rescuer, and when Happy Pat's head took her squarely in the chest she went backward through the door and brought up on the opposite side of the alley.

CHAPTER XII.

PAT HOT ON THE TRAIL.

Pat did not wait to see what damage had been done.

The other termagant was coming along the hall behind them as fast as she could travel.

Still holding to his sister's hand, he went out the door like a shot, she following, and he ran with her along the alley to the street nearest their home, and the last they heard of the two women they were yelling for the police.

"Served thim roight, begorra!" cried Pat, when they slackened their pace. "Sure, it was a dirthy thrick dhey played on me, so it was, and Oi have only paid dhem back fur it. Oi wush Oi could have served dhe other wan dhe same by dhe same token."

"Yes, but I hope you have not killed her, Pat."

"Nary a kill, darlint, dhe way she was a-yellin' whin we came out av dhe alley."

"And where now, Pat?"

"Home wid you, and dhen phwere Oi tould ye."

They talked as they hurried along, and on reaching home Pat only remained long enough to catch a bite of supper.

He left his sister to tell the whole story, only saying enough himself to show what a brave deed Katy had performed in his behalf, and then was off to see Fan-tan Tom.

He had had plenty of time to think the case over, during his imprisonment, but he had not been able to solve the mystery, of course. In fact, he could hardly begin to touch the outside of it, as yet. It was something he could not fathom.

But there was one thing he did believe, thoroughly.

That was that Fan-tan Tom had been right in his estimate of Sinclair Stackwood.

It ran in Happy Pat's head that it was he who had apprised Con Kellar and Nig Branty of his visit to the house, and if so, that would account for all the knowledge they had shown proof of possessing.

The wonder to Pat was that they had not killed him.

But, then, he reflected upon what had

been said on that point at the time of his capture.

As may be surmised, he did not take the shortest cut, this time, to Fan-tan Tom's domicile, but he lost no time on the way, and presently burst in like a whirlwind.

Fan-tan was not in sight.

The partner was there.

"Where's Fan-tan?" demanded Pat.

"Me no tellee you," was the response.

"You don't know?"

"No. You no seen him?"

"Not even his pigtail, Chop."

"Him go to findee you, allee samee no comee back."

"He went to find me?"

"Ep."

"When did he go?"

"Bout two, thlee 'clock."

"And how did he know phwere he was goin to foind me? Sure, he never wint to me home at all, at all."

"No, no; boy bling lettell fo' him; him lead lettell; him say Pat wantee him belly bad; him go double quickee findee you; puttee big gun in pocket; gitee outee."

"Dhe murtherin' bla'guards!" cried Pat, almost beside himself. "Sure, dhey have got in dheir foine work on me partner already, so dhey have. Oh! may dhe saints presarve him until Oi can foind him! And, by dhe same token may Oi foind thim, too."

"What mattee?" asked Fan-tan's partner.

"Phwat would be dhe matther? ye haythin, ye! Don't ye see dhat poor Fan-tan is a goner?"

"But you all light, allee samee; Fan-tan him come back when him losee allee money; allee samee never comee back while him win money—hi-yi! you bettee not."

"But ye wrong him, Chop. Dhere is no fan-tan in dhis."

"No?"

"Sure. Oi tell ye he has fallen into dhe hands av dhe inimy, and no tellin' phwat has happened to him. But, say?"

"Whatee wantee?"

"Do you know where he went to?"

"No, me no know, but allee samee him left lettell here—"

"Give it to me!" cried Pat, eagerly.

"Give it to me, Oi say. Dhe wonder is dhat you wouldn't said—"

But by that time the letter was in his hands.

It was not a letter, properly speaking, but a scrawl on a piece of waste paper.

In big, bold, straggling characters, Pat had to admit to himself that it looked about like what he must have done himself, had he been really the author of it.

It took him some minutes to spell it out, but finally he mastered its meaning.

And that meaning was to this effect:

"Fan-tan:

"Come as quick as you can to No. — street, and come right in the basement door. I will be there and will explain more then. On the track. Pat."

Such was its import, translated out of the original hieroglyphics into which its meaning had been couched.

"Poor Tom! poor Tom!" sighed Pat. "Sure, it is maybe enough dhat all Oi will foind will be his cold, yaller corpse: Oi wush now dhat Oi had not left him fur wan minit."

"You no thinkee him dead?" asked the partner, in alarm.

"It is lucky if he ain't, can't ye see fur yesel'? If ye can't see it, sure, Oi have no toime to be tellin' ye. Oi must be off to his rescue, begob!"

"You blingee him back?"

"Yis, be hivvins, dead or aloive, Oi will bring him back!"

"Heap goodee! You bully boy, Pat; Fan-tan him say so many time. You go in to win."

Pat did not linger there a moment more than necessary, but was off like a shot for adventure new.

He had a clew, the missive that had lured Fan-tan away, but whether or not it would amount to anything as a means of finding him, that remained to be tested.

Avoiding the streets through which he was accustomed to pass, he made his way as directly as possible to the place of his destination.

It was an old-time house on a disreputable street.

Three stories high, but squatty in appearance, it had a front stoop with a basement door underneath.

Pat took a survey of the place from the opposite side of the street, and stopped to consider the matter before he ventured further. He did not want to get into further trouble himself right away.

It was night, remember.

The street was but poorly lighted just here and at first Pat thought the house was all dark.

While he looked, however, he came to the conclusion that there was a light in one of the rooms of the middle floor, for that window seemed a little less dark than the rest.

But, if there was a light there, then the windows were extra heavily curtained. And this was the house to which his Chinese pard had been lured.

How to get in, that was the question. Once in, it might be a question how to get out again.

To ring the bell would be the height of folly, for what would he say?

Suddenly it flashed into mind how Fan-tan had been told to enter, and Happy Pat resolved to try the same plan, come what might of it. So he crossed the street and went to the basement door.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOING INTO THE TIGER'S LAIR.

Pat labored under excitement.

Having just been rescued from one dilemma, he did not purpose getting into another if he could help it.

And yet, to apply the word correctly, he was in a dilemma already. If he went ahead, he was running into danger; if he did not go ahead, he was false to his friend.

His decision was made.

All that remained was to observe due caution and avoid getting into trouble if possible.

He listened for a few moments before he acted.

Nothing was to be heard, and he carefully tried the door.

He turned the knob slowly, then pushed gently, but he soon found that it did not yield to his touch—that it was secured within, and that he was barred out.

"Begorra, it is no more dhan Oi expected," he muttered to himself.

Was Fan-tan in this house? How was he going to find out? And, if he was there, how was he to be rescued?

"It would turn dhe brain av a Sollymun, so it would," the Irish lad said to himself. "Sure, Oi almost wush dhat Oi had not got mixed up in it, dhat same Oi do."

It was almost utter darkness where he stood.

He was in a little square space under the stoop, and he proceeded to feel about to learn what it was like.

This he did carefully, lest he might displace something that would come down with a clatter and give away the fact that some one was prowling around there in the dark.

But there was nothing of that kind.

What he did find was a little door, as he took it to be, opening into a small space under the steps of the stoop.

This he discovered by finding that something yielded under his hand as he felt along that side, and in a moment more he had found the latch that opened the door.

With due caution he opened it, and he decided to strike a match.

The light of the match revealed a small closet-like space under the stoop steps, in which was nothing but an empty garbage can and some rolls of kindling wood.

He put out the match the moment it had served its purpose, and was about to close the door, when hasty steps claimed his attention.

They were coming along the street at a rapid pace.

He heard the voices of two men in discussion as they came, and what was his surprise to find that they turned in by the stoop.

Had there been any light there, he must surely have been discovered. Or, if he had not been in the closet under the steps—for he had been just on the point of stepping out.

As it was, he pulled the door to, taking care not to let it latch, and even as he did so the two men were already at hand.

Pat had a finger in the crack of the door, so that it could make no sound.

"Lucky fer us he don't know anything more to tell, anyhow," said the voice of Con Kellar. "He can't do us any hurt now, and all we have got to do is keep out of sight for a time."

"And it won't be well fer him to fall into our hands again," growled Nig Branty. "If he does, we'll carve him, you bet."

"Bet your life on it."

Pat now heard the fumbling of a key against the door of the basement.

"And he won't find his Chinee pard on hand to help him any more, that is one good thing," said Kellar.

"You're right. Dat Chinee no fool, but we got him on de hip in good shape, didn't we? Did you ever see a yaller-face as surprised in all yer life? It was as good as a circus!"

"You will see another look on his mug at midnight, when we—"

But at that moment the key found the keyhole and the lock clicked, and he did not finish what he had started to say.

They passed into the house, closing the door after them, and Happy Pat's heart resumed its beating—for it seemed to him as if it had been standing still for a time.

"Howly Saint Pathrick!" he exclaimed under his breath, "but thot was dhe divil's own close shave, so it was. Sure, dhe wimmin have tould thim that Oi have escaped; but little dhey t'ink dhat Oi am so close to thim dhis blessed minnit."

His first inclination was to get out and run away as fast as his legs could carry him.

But he quickly put that thought away.

"No, begob! Danger or no danger, Fan-tan Tom has got to be found, and got out av dhe fix he is in. Sure, he wint into danger himsel' whin he thought

it was me dhat sint fur him, and Oi would be a coward and all if Oi wint back on him now. Nix, begorra!"

He stepped forth from the closet and closed the door carefully.

That done, he listened at the other door, but nothing was to be heard at the moment, and no light was to be seen.

He tried the knob.

It turned, but this time it did more—it opened the door.

Pat's heart was going like a trip-hammer almost, and he felt perspiration standing out on his forehead.

He opened the door a little way and looked in, but it was too dark for him to see a thing. By listening, however, he heard the footsteps of the two men on the floor above.

He slipped in and shut the door.

What to do he hardly knew, though he knew well enough his object.

It was, first, the finding and rescuing of Fan-tan Tom. Then the getting to the bottom of the mystery with him.

Feeling that he might safely do so, catching a faint glimmer of light from above, and knowing that he was not likely to be detected, he struck a match to get a momentary view of the place he was in.

It was a basement hall, bare and unfurnished.

There was a door immediately at hand on the right, and another further along.

On the left, about half way down the hall, was an offset with a door facing the front. That, at a glance, was clearly the door leading into a closet or down into the cellar.

The offset explained that the stairs were contained in it, and that the ascent began at the rear end of the hall.

These things Pat noted in a brief moment.

"Begorra, it is a foine chance Oi have to run, if nade be," he said to himself. "Oi could get out av here twice dhe while dhey wur comin' down the stairs, and maybe dhey would never know Oi had been here at all, at all. But dhat would never do."

He paused to think before going further.

"No, fur sure it would not," he decided. "Oi could get into dhe hole under dhe stoop, thrue enough, but dhey would be afther lockin' dhe dure, and Oi would be no better off nor phwat Oi was at first. No, begob, Oi am here, and here Oi must stay, until Oi make sure dhat Fan-tan Tom is not in dhe house, at dhe laste. Let me look further."

He stepped silently to the door in the offset.

There was a key in the lock, and he softly turned it and unlocked the door.

He opened it, and the damp air that came out told him at once that it was the door leading to the cellar, and he had only to strike another match to prove it.

Pausing a moment to decide what he should do, a new thought came to his mind. He stepped within upon the little landing at the top of the steps, and there, sitting down, he hurriedly removed his shoes. He little thought that act was going to get him into trouble anew.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAT'S HEAD IN THE LION'S MOUTH.

His shoes off, Pat placed them against the wall on his left and got up on his feet.

He could now move lively without being heard, and it was his intention to go on up to the other floors of the house and learn whatever he could of the secrets of his foes.

Coming out, he closed the door save a little crack, so that he could have a sure place of retreat without making a noise opening the door, and felt his way further along the hall until he came to the stairs, which he proceeded forthwith to ascend.

Just a faint suggestion of light came to him from the second floor above the basement.

He did not dare light another match now.

Feeling his way, he went carefully, yet swiftly, up, and in a few moments came to the landing where the light was.

It was a little lamp standing on a corner shelf in the hall, and was turned low. Here the hall was carpeted, and there was one chair at the end where the light was.

The hall was short, and Pat saw there was no possible place in which he could hide.

There were three doors in sight, however.

Pat heard men's voices, and it did not take him long to locate the room from which the sound came.

Advancing to that door, he laid his ear against it and listened. He was there to learn all he could, and, having run the risk so far, he was going to stop at nothing.

"Well, ain't it about time they was here?" he heard Nig Branty asking, the first word he caught.

"Yes, they'd orter be here in a few minutes," responded Kellar.

"Wonder what more is wanted of us?"

"Give it up, but we'll find out soon enough when they git here, no doubt."

"I hope it ain't nothin' that will run us into any risk, now that that feller is at large ag'in. He is bound to git us into trouble, if we don't watch out sharp."

"And he will get into trouble himself if he don't watch out sharper, I kin tell him that."

Pat trembled as he listened, yet had to grin at the same time.

"If yez ownly knowed Oi was here," he thought.

Just then came a sound from below.

A door opened and closed.

The next moment steps were heard on the stairs, and at the same time a movement was heard in the room where the two men were.

Pat's hair fairly stood on end for a moment. There he was, between two fires, as it were, and without the slightest chance for escape, as it appeared at first.

There was no time given for thought.

If he turned toward the stairs he would be seen by the man coming up, while if he remained two seconds where he was the door might open and reveal him.

Two yards away was another door, at the end of the hall, and with a leap Pat had his hands on the knob to try it. It was not locked, and it was only the work of a second for him to slip in.

But, horror! the room was lighted!

Not a fraction of a second too soon had he been, for even as he closed this door the other opened, and the man came up the stairs and was greeted by Con Kellar.

Pat had no thought for that, however. What he expected was a shot, a shout, or a hand at his throat, the moment he entered the room, and for a second or two he stood in a crouching manner, much like a dog that expects a cuff or a kick.

To his surprise, nothing happened, and he ventured to look up.

The voices were in the same room with him now, as it seemed, and he could not comprehend it.

A glance around him, however, told the story. He had entered an alcove of the main room, and was where he could not be seen by those in the larger part of the room.

And the reason he had not been heard was because he had opened this door at the same time that Con Kellar had opened the other.

"I am glad to find you here," the newcomer was saying.

Pat recognized the voice instantly.

It was Sinclair Stackwood.

"Well, what more is it ye want of us?" inquired Con Kellar. "We have got to keep mighty shady now."

"How is that?"

"Why, that young Irish lad has got out of our hands, somehow, and no telling what minute he will bring the police down on us."

"Thunder! After my putting you on to him, to think that you would let him get away from you again. This may spoil the whole business. Confound it! do you think he knows anything about this place?"

"How can he?"

"And no one followed you here?"

"Naw, of course not. But we have got to take care not to be seen."

"And what about the Chinese?"

"He is right as a trivet, you bet. We have got him trussed up down in the cellar, and he can't get away."

"So you thought of the other one, but—"

"Well, it can't happen here, for how could anybody git in? Oh, no, no use to worry about that."

Pat could have jumped for joy almost, learning where his partner was, but he had to observe the greatest caution not to move or make a sound that could be heard.

"All right," said Stackwood, "see that he does not get away; and take the best of care that you do not get nabbed before I am done with you. You had better disguise yourselves some, to lessen the chances. Now, pay attention to what I am going to say."

"You bet."

"Before I begin, remember that you have been well paid, so far, and that you will be paid more when you are done. If you should get into trouble, do not forget your path not to drag me into it with you."

"That's all right," they both agreed, as a matter of course.

"Now, I am going to give that fool one more chance, seeing that you failed to do for him the first time. I want you to bring him here, and then go out while I have a talk with him. There must be no witness to what I have to say to him."

"All right."

"If he will come to my terms, well and good. If not, then you can finish the job at midnight. You understand?"

"Certainly we do."

"Bring him then. And if, while he is here, there should come a man to see me, you are to tell him to wait. Then bring me word right away that he is here. His name is Dawson."

"We'll tend to him, you bet."

"Now bring the fellow and leave him here with me."

The door opened, and the two men left the room and opened the other door further along the hall.

Happy Pat listened sharply, and heard them moving about for a few moments. Then they returned, treading heavily, as

if carrying something, and he rightly guessed what that something was.

"Shall we onag him?" asked Kellar.

"Yes, remove the gag and place him in that chair and retire."

There was a few moments of delay, and the two men left the room, and then a further pause.

Heavy curtains on a pole partly cut off the alcove in which Pat was hiding, and he could not resist the desire to take a peep into the other room from behind one of them.

There, in a chair, sat the man whom he had seen struck down on the previous night, his hands and feet bound, and he looked ill and pale. In a chair opposite sat his brother, his sinister face looking more like the face of a devil than of a human.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LION'S MOUTH CLOSES.

Sinclair Stackwood was the first to speak.

"Well, you see what it has come to," he grated fiercely.

The other made no response, but sat with head bowed, as if too sick to talk.

"You see what it has come to," the other repeated. "I am going to let you see my hand, for I have nothing to fear. You have no witness, and I can deny it if you hold me to account."

"I'll be out of your way shortly," said the other, in low, strained tone. "I am sick—I believe I am dying. Then you will have it all your own way, Sinclair. You have murdered me; you can never run away from that, and it will haunt you while you live."

"Ha, ha, ha! So it might a man of less nerve than I have got, but it will not trouble me. Yes, I have murdered you," in a low tone; "that is to say, I have begun it, and I am going to finish it unless you come to my terms and do what I say."

"Then murder me at once and end my misery."

"You will not do it?"

"Never!"

"All right, you have sealed your fate. But, hear what I have to offer you: If you will appoint a wedding day with Nellie Dawson, and then let me personate you and marry her, I will let you live. Not only that, but I will see that you are well supported in some foreign land. Unless you do this, to-night you die, and your death will ever be a mystery. You see, I show you my hand."

"You dog!" the other cried, with a show of spirit, rousing up and his eyes flashing. "Can you imagine me so base as to do what you demand? You have no hope of winning the love of that pure girl yourself, but you would rob me of her at any cost. Never! Do your worst, but make sure that you do it well, for once let me escape, and see if I do not bring you to the fate you deserve for this. I will expose—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You can't do it. Where is your witness. I would deny it; and people would only laugh at you for your trouble. They would call you insane if you were to tell such a story about your brother."

"Brother! I spurn and disown you!"

His head sank again.

Happy Pat was almost beside himself with indignation. Let him only get the chance to rescue Fan-tan Tom, and see if they together would not save this poor man and bring the other to justice.

"All right, I will do my worst. At midnight you die, and no one will ever know what has become of you. It will be a mystery forever. I will mourn you a proper time, and then I will make an-

other effort to win the woman I love, and with you out of the way she will listen."

The prisoner uttered a moan.

His villainous brother stepped to the door and whistled.

The two men came up from downstairs, and the prisoner was removed from the room.

"I am bound to win," the scoundrel said to himself, as he paced up and down the room. "Now let Dawson come, and let me settle with him—"

There was a ring at the bell.

In a few moments a man was shown into the room, and Happy Pat, still looking, saw that he had a pistol in his hand.

At the sight of the weapon Sinclair Stackwood leaped back, and his face turned ghastly. He put out his hands as if to ward off an expected bullet, while he cried—

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!"

"You need have no fear, sir," was the calm return. "You must know that you deserve to be shot, or you would have no such fear of me."

"No, no; but I thought maybe you believed that I know where your daughter is, and I swear that I do not know. Put away your weapon and sit down, for I want to talk with you."

"I prefer to hold it in my hand, but I will sit down. This is an unusual place to appoint for an interview, when you might have called at my house. Now, say what you have to say, and let me be going. I do not enjoy your company well enough to remain long in it."

Happy Pat was looking and listening with eyes protruding and every sense alert.

"Thank you for the compliment," said Sinclair, taking a seat, his face resuming its sinister expression. "I wanted you here because I am going to say certain things to you which you might like to prove against me if you had a witness, and here I am sure that you can have none. As to your weapon, hold it in your hand if you choose; I have no fear of it. You dare not shoot me in this house."

"Well, say what you have to say to me, and be quick about it."

"Your property is all mortgaged very heavily, and my brother and I hold the mortgages. While our father lived you were tided along for the sake of old friendship, and I have thus far listened to my brother in your behalf in the same line. But, it was not that. You have a daughter, and I love her. If you will force her to marry me, I will sign off my half interest in those mortgages. If not, I will push you to the wall."

"Quite what I expected, sir. But my daughter is missing, and so, we have learned, is your brother. Is it not possible that they have eloped together? My daughter hated you, and feared me because I once spoke to her in your favor, at your urgent request."

"No, it is not possible, sir."

"Ha! how do you know that, if you know not where she is?"

"Because," stooping and speaking in lower tone, "I know where he is and what has become of him."

"You scoundrel! you have not killed him?"

"Softly, Mr. Dawson, softly. Of course I have not killed him, but I have urged him to commit suicide. You see, I have led him to believe that your daughter has eloped with me, and that she is now my wife, and—well, I pressed the button and he did the rest, you see."

"You more than scoundrel! I will expose you and bring you to trial, no

matter what you may do to me in revenge. I will tell what you have said to me, and—"

"And that will be all, Mr. Dawson. Can you prove it without a witness to support you? I guess not. I would deny it, and there you would be."

"But, you have no right to live with honest people."

"Only your opinion, sir."

"An opinion that I'll make good, you scoundrel. No, you do not know where my daughter is, because I have put her away myself out of your reach—do you understand me?"

Sinclair was staring hard at him.

"You?" he said.

"Yes. I had to do it, because I feared for her safety. I intended informing your brother, privately, so that he would understand, but now he is missing, and only you know where he is. But you shall be made to disclose, you villain. I shall press you without mercy!"

"But, Mr. Dawson—" and the fellow was white to the lips.

"Well, what?"

"Your property. I own it all now, and I can beggar you with a stroke of the pen. Think twice before you act—"

"I have thought for the last, sir. Beggar me if you will, but you cannot longer bully me. I have borne what I have only for my child's sake, but it now comes to an end."

"Then you will not—"

"No!"

At that juncture heavy feet were heard on the stairs, and in a moment the door was thrown open.

Into the room came Con Kellar and Nig Branty, and Kellar held a pair of shoes in his hand—shoes which Happy Pat recognized as his own, and his heart sank.

"See here what we've found!" Kellar cried. "These belong to that Irish lad, for we have seen 'em before, and he is somewhere in this house. He ain't in the cellar nor anywhere below, so he must be here."

Pat turned to make for the door, but his foot caught in the curtain, in his haste, and down he went with a loud noise, almost jerking the curtain from the pole, and before he could recover Nig Branty and Sinclair Stackwood threw themselves upon him.

CHAPTER XVI.

WORKING A MIRACLE.

It was a moment of intense excitement.

Pat made an effort to break away, but it was ineffectual.

He was only as a child in the grasp of two such men, and in a moment was rendered helpless.

For the moment Hiram Dawson had stood powerless to act, for very astonishment, but now he sprang forward, with revolver in hand, shouting:

"Release that boy, Sinclair Stackwood! Release him, or I will put a bullet into your vile heart! No witness at hand, you said; I'll show you whether I have a witness or—"

Thud!

A sign from Stackwood, and Con Kellar struck the man a blow from behind with a sandbag, dropping him to the floor as if dead.

"And we'll show you, curse you!" Sinclair grated. "You will find that I did not begin this game before I had counted my chances. Here is another mystery for midnight, my men."

"Two of 'em, I should say," said Branty, who was holding Happy Pat to the ground.

"Yes, you are right. That fellow shall die here and now!"

He raised his pistol to fire.

But his arm was caught by Con Kellar, and forced up.

"Not here!" that fellow cried. "What are ye thinkin' about, anyhow? We kin tend to him."

"And let him get away again. No, let me—"

"Not by a big sight. Ther shot may be heard, and a policeman might break in and find us hyer. Besides, it would leave blood on the floor. Have some sense."

"Well, you are right. You have got your own necks to look out for, of course. Lucky for the rat that you caught my arm, though, or he would be dead now, I can tell him. Do you hear, you cur? At midnight to-night you die! Your body will be found in the river."

"Sure it is all wan to me, phwether it is now or some other toime," said Pat, with the courage born of despair. "Oi can't die but wanst, anyhow."

"And we are going to take good care that you die that once."

"What will we do with him?" asked Branty.

"We'll fix him the same as he was before, and put him in the cellar along with his yaller pard," said Kellar.

"Well, tie him then."

This Kellar speedily did, and Branty got up.

"What about this other one?" he asked, then, indicating Mr. Dawson on the floor.

"He has got to be taken away from here to some place where he can recover, but where he must be held a close prisoner till morning, so that he cannot interfere with me before the work is done."

"Why not put him to sleep, too?" asked Kellar.

"Because it will not do. I must spare him, for reasons known only to myself."

"But he said he had proof in this youngster—"

"What of that? Will he ever find the youngster? You are going to take care of him."

"That's so, that's so. Well, we'll dump him down in the cellar, and then we'll be ready to take care of this other for you, in the way you say."

"Yes, for you will be safe enough now."

"How is that?"

"Because the fact that this chap is here alone is proof that he did not tell the police, or they would have been here with him."

"Ha! that's so, that's so. But how came he here at all?"

"Must have followed you."

"By Harry! that is it. We didn't lock the basement door when we came in. Never had a thought of any one coming in after us. Our fault, but we have made up for it. Take that, cuss ye!"

He gave Pat a kick as he spoke.

They picked the lad up and carried him out of the room and down the stairs and to the cellar.

"There, hang you!" they cried, pitching him on the floor with no gentle force. "If you get away again, just let us know it, will you? You'll be in purgatory before the clock strikes one!"

Pat would have retorted, but the gag hindered.

The two fellows left him there in the dark, and went up stairs and closed and locked the door at the top.

Pat heard them ascend the stairs to

the next floor, and again, in a few minutes, come down and leave the house by the front door, and then all was still.

If the Irish lad had been in a fix before, he was in a worse situation this time.

He now knew that certain death awaited him.

There could be no escape this time, as he fully believed. There was no possible way by which he could help himself.

Fan-tan Tom, too, was in the same fix, as he now knew, and was with him in the same cellar somewhere. But, both gagged, it was impossible for them to communicate with each other.

Presently Happy Pat heard something like a low moan.

He listened.

It was repeated, after an interval, and Pat answered it in like manner, as best he could.

Immediately followed two such sounds, in quick succession, and when Pat rejoined in like manner they were repeated, and he had every reason to believe that he had opened communication with Fan-tan.

But that was as far as they were likely to carry it.

Neither could speak a word.

Presently, however, Happy Pat heard something like a scraping or moving on the floor.

It was no regular sound, but came by fits and turns, and he recognized that it was gradually drawing nearer to where he lay. He believed that it must be Fan-tan.

Presently it stopped, and there was a moan like he had heard before.

Pat answered it again.

There was a similar response, and then again the scraping sound, and finally Pat felt his partner knock against him.

There was a grunt of satisfaction, to which Pat responded, and Fan-tan lay still for a few minutes to rest, and while he was resting Happy Pat tried to think what was to be done next.

Could he not manage to untie his partner's hands, by moving until his fingers came in contact with the cords that held them.

No sooner the thought than he began trying to put it into execution, and after some effort he got himself into position where his hands came into touch with those of his pard.

The first thing they did was to exchange a pressure of hands.

Then Pat set to work.

It was a slow and tedious task, but realizing the danger they were in, Pat worked with a will and at last was rewarded.

The knots began to loosen, under his steady application, and then the strings gave way and he was enabled to take them off and Fan-tan had the use of his hands!

There was a mutual grunt of victory.

Fan-tan was only a moment in tearing the gag out of his mouth then, and he exclaimed:

"Goshee dangee! You bettee we comee out on top yet, Happy, if we have to lose legee! Me soon gettee you loose, you bettee. Been in heap badee fixee, sure enough."

He lighted a match while speaking, and with his knife speedily set Happy Pat at liberty.

"Begorra, ye are roight, Fan-tan," Pat agreed. "Give me yure hand on it. We are goin' in now to make Rome howl, if we kin git out av here, now dhat we are free, and if dhere ain't a shaking amongst dhe dhry bones ye may take

dhe head av me fur a cabbage, so ye may."

And then their match went out, and at the same time they heard the faint click of the lock at the top of the cellar stairs.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BAND BEGINS TO PLAY.

"St!" hissed Pat, and he caught Fan-tan by the arm.

"You bettee," whispered the Chinaman. "Me gottee long gun; didn't take him away. Me shootee blame heads off now!"

They stood close together, their ears keenly alert, and they caught the very faintest sound suggestive of the opening of the door, and then a light step on the stairs.

The thought came to both at the same time that this must be a friend. Their enemy would have no call to come down thus quietly, and in the dark. What did it mean? Who was coming? They could only await the outcome with what patience they could command.

It must be a friend, or else their enemy, Stackwood, coming quietly down to murder them.

Or maybe it was Thaddeus.

This last thought came to Happy Pat, but he put it aside when he recollected how securely the man was bound when last seen by him.

Once or twice the stairs creaked slightly, but there was no other sound, and before the quaint parads were any further enlightened the front door of the house was heard to open and close, and there was a tread of feet on the stairs above.

It was Con Kellar and Nig Branty returned.

As their steps died away on the floor above, there came a whisper from the direction of the cellar steps—

"Pat?"

Pat recognized the voice instantly, with great surprise.

"Kathy!" he exclaimed. "Sure, phwat are ye doin' in dhis divil's own den, me swate sister? It is kilted ye will be, so ye will."

Pat struck a match while speaking, and there by the foot of the stairs stood his sister, her face pale but determined.

She ran forward to him instantly.

"Oh!" she cried, "I knew I would find you, and I am so glad that no harm has come to ye, Pat."

"But how came ye here, darlint?"

"I was that uneasy about ye, Pat, that I had to come. I couldn't rest at home, for somethin' was tellin' me to come, and so I stole out of the house and set out to find ye."

"But how did ye do it, Oi ask ye?"

"Why, I went first to Fan-tan's place, and there I learned about the letter and the rest av it, and so I came here and watched my chance to get into the house. Whin them two evil ones went out, sure I came in and set out to look fur ye, and that is all of it."

"Ye are a jewel!" cried Pat. "But by dhe powers, we have got to get out av here before we git nabbed again!"

"Allee samee jest light," agreed Fan-tan.

"Yes, yes, we must escape at once," urged Katy, "and you must never put your nose into such a place again, Pat."

"Dhat same is phwat Oi am going to do, none the less," said Pat. "Oi mane to see dhat dhese murtherin' divils are caught and put phwere dhey can do no more harm, so Oi do. And, by dhe same token, the innocent wans rescued and restored to their roights."

"But you will only get into more trouble, Pat."

"Oi can't help it av Oi do; Oi am in dhe game to stay now, let it be sink or swim or phwaterver."

"But we must not remain here," urged Katy.

"Allee samee must gittee out while can," said Fan-tan.

"Begorra, dhere is work to be done," said Pat, suddenly recollecting what the villains were about to do. "Sure, an honest man is about to be taken away from here and consaled till morning, and he must be rescued. Which wan of us shall undertake dhat?"

"Allee samee makee no diff," said Fan-tan.

"One of us has got to do it, and the other has got to go and bring dhe police here double quick. Oi guess Oi will lave you folley dhe man and foind out phwere he is put, Fan-tan, and dhen when dhis business here is settled, we can see to dhe rescue av him. Sure, we have got dhe game roight in our own hands now, av we make no mistake."

There was no time just then for him to tell his companions what he had overheard.

They moved forward to the cellar steps, went up as silently as possible, and out into the hall of the basement, where Pat turned the key in the lock.

This he did in order that the rascals might think their prisoners still safe, if they came that way and tried the door. And that done, they went forward to the front door.

This was now locked, but the key was in the lock on the inside. Pat unlocked the door and removed the key.

At that moment a door was heard above stairs, and then the tread of feet.

"Whist!" exclaimed the Irish lad, in whisper.

"They coming," whispered Fan-tan.

"Yis, and we must out av here. Come on, but make no sound, on yure loives."

They went out, and Pat drew the door to and carefully locked it, putting the key into his pocket.

The men were just opening the door above them, and the next moment came out upon the stoop over their heads, and Pat was all a-tremble with excitement.

Pressing his sister and Fan-tan back gently, he ventured to take a peep out around the steps, for it was not likely that he would be discovered, considering the darkness, and there he discovered a carriage.

He dodged back again at once.

"Sure, dhe game is yures, Fan-tan," he said in low whisper. "Dhere is dhe kerridge, and ye have ownly to folley it to find out phwat dhey do wid dhe gintleman. Wait till dhey start, and dhen out wid ye and afther thim."

"All light, me do him, you bettee," assured the Chinese.

The men passed down the steps and to the sidewalk, and Pat and Fan-tan, peering out, saw them lift a helpless man into the vehicle.

That done, one of the rascals got in with him and the other climbed up to the box with the driver, and the carriage rolled away up the street, bearing Hiram Dawson to a hiding-place.

"Now, thin, Fan-tan," whispered Pat.

"You bettee," was the response, and the Chinaman slipped quietly out from his retreat and gave chase, making hardly a sound in his soft shoes.

"Now, what about us?" asked Katy.

"Sure, Oi must see you home again, swate wan—"

"No, Pat, I mane to stay wid you and see the thing out."

"But phwat av we get into more throuble? Sure, ye had betther be at home safe—"

"And know dhat you are out in danger? Now, Pat, it is not fair, no more it is, afther all I have done fur ye."

"Well, well, come along wid me, dhen, and we'll go to dhe police station and tell our story, and see phwat dhey will think av it dhis toime. Sure, Oi know enough to turn a sargint's head."

Pat had no shoes on, but that made no difference. He set forth at once and his sister with him, and in due time they were at their destination.

There Pat told his story.

He had to tell it at length, which took considerable time, and then he was questioned and cross-questioned still further.

"Begorra, an' yez mane to kape me here all noight, dhere will be no nade av yure going at all, at all," he finally declared, with some spirit. "Dhe ball opens at midnoight."

"And there is plenty of time till then," said the sergeant on duty. "But we are ready now," he added. "I have no reason to doubt your story, my lad, but every reason to believe it, and we'll attend to the scooping of that arch rascal by name of Stackwood."

They were ready in a few moments, then, the sergeant and five officers, and Pat and his sister led the way back to the house from which they had recently escaped.

When they came near they were met by Fan-tan Tom, who had performed his mission and got back again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WRONG DETHRONED AND RIGHT TRIUMPHANT.

Fan-tan Tom met them at the corner.

"Holdee on," Fan-tan said, as soon as he recognized the Irish lad.

"Phwat is it now, Fan-tan," Pat inquired. "Phwere did ye lave yure man ye wint to folley?"

The Chinese quickly explained that point, and added:

"Now, you lettee me say word or two. Dliver standee before house now with him calliage, waitte for 'nother job. If we go in, he allee samee give 'larm and be no goodee."

"That is about right, Chinaman," agreed the sergeant.

"Yep, so me think. Well, you sendee two policemen ahead, let them allest dliver on quiet, gittee on box with him and makee him go to house where man just been left. Me go too, and we have him out of that in no time, you bettee, and bling him back."

"Begorra! ye have it," cried Pat.

"Yes, that is a good idea," agreed the sergeant. "Yot two go ahead and do as this Chineer has indicated, and take him with you," addressing two of his men. "The rest of us will be enough for the three who are in the house. When you find the gentleman, tell him what is going on here, and bring him right to the house and let him ring the bell, you standing behind him. We will do the rest."

They saluted and went off, Fan-tan going with them.

The others watched from the corner.

It was a quiet arrest, the policemen climbing right up to the box and the Chineer at the same time getting into the vehicle, and it went off up the street at a walk at first, in order not to attract notice.

The others then went forward in the direction of the house, watching as they approached to make sure that they were not seen—or at any rate that no one was

on the outside watching. And seeing no one, they filed silently around the steps and to the basement door.

Here Pat brought the key into play.

The door had not been disturbed, evidently, since he had locked it on coming forth, and he soon had it open and they entered.

Each one took care to be as quiet as possible, and no sound was made that could reach those above stairs. The door was closed and locked, the key left in the lock on the inside.

They listened.

Voices came to them faintly from upstairs, but that was all.

Pat struck a match in order that the policemen might get a view of the place and learn the ground.

Barely had the match gone out when a door opened somewhere above, and the voices immediately sounded louder and steps were heard on the stairs, telling that the men were coming down.

"Phwat the divil is to be done?" gasped Pat.

"Why, we'll take them, of course," whispered the sergeant. "Ready with your barkers, my men."

"No, no, let's see dhe fun first," urged Pat. "Maybe dhey are going down into dhe cellar fur mesel' and Fan-tan, and Oi would loike to hear phwat dhey have to say whin dhey foind us gone."

"But they'll see us; they are bringing a light."

"Quick! we'll go in here."

Pat opened the door on the right of the hall, and, urged by him, and perhaps taking his view of it, the others stepped in.

They closed the door all but a crack, and had barely taken refuge there when the rascals came down the last flight of stairs and along the hall to the cellar door.

"The job must be done well," Stackwood was saying. "They must be run down close to the dock, somewhere, and dumped in like so many cats in a bag."

"Don't you worry about them," assured Con Kellar. "Me and Nig will see to that all right."

"And we're sure they ain't got away this time," said the latter.

"No, fer the door is locked, ye see."

They unlocked and opened the door of the cellar, and went down the steps.

"Now fur dhe circus!" whispered Pat, now happy indeed. "Phwat a howl will go up in about wan minute, you see if there don't. Begorra! it will pay me well fur all Oi have suffered."

"And we'll stand ready to take them when they come up," said the sergeant.

"Come on, but make not a sound, my boys."

They stepped silently forth, and took their places on two sides of the cellar-way.

About the time they stationed themselves there, they heard a howl from below.

There were cursing, ravings, questionings, accusations and denials, in quick and rapid and vengeful utterance, more than we could hope to quote even with space at our command.

Happy Pat fairly hugged himself to keep from being heard laughing, and the policemen shared in his amusement.

Then they were heard coming up the stairs.

"But the door was locked; you seen that fer yerself," Con Kellar was declaring as they came. "How did they get out with the door locked?"

"Somebody helped them out, that is how," growled Stackwood. "We have

got to get away from here, double quick. We must get the other one and be off at once."

They came up and out, still talking, and the officers let them all get fairly out before they sprang upon them.

The struggle was short and decisive. They were made prisoners.

"How do yez loike it, ye bla'guards?" cried Pat, dancing around with delight. "Sure, dhe roight is bound to win, every toime, whin such spalpeens as dhe loikes av yous set yureselves up against it, you bet!"

Their courage gave way instantly, and they tried to beg off, more especially Stackwood, who offered the officers half his fortune if they would only give him a chance to make good his escape. But that was useless. They were handcuffed, every one.

That done, Pat led the way up-stairs, his sister with him, and the others followed with the prisoners.

There Thaddeus Stackwood was discovered, still bound.

He was freed immediately.

Some explanations were made while they waited the coming of the other officers with Mr. Dawson, and they had not long to wait.

Mr. Dawson had regained his consciousness and was all right, and he could hardly restrain his rage against Sinclair Stackwood, for he knew the rascal for just what he was now, and from his own lips.

"And that boy, that witness?" he cried, after a tirade. "Ah! there you are, my young man. You heard what he said, and you will be able to support me when I expose him. Ah! you wretch! I have my hand at your throat at last, and I'll keep it there!"

"Bet yure swate loife Oi heard phwat he said to ye," cried Pat. "And, by dhe same token, Oi heard phwat he said to his poor brother, too. Oh! he is a daisy, is he, but we'll see dhat he goes up dhe river, av dhere is any law in dhe land to send him dhere. Give me yure hand, Fan-tan Tom! Begorra, but we have got dhere wid both feet, and ground to spare!"

Sinclair Stackwood's heinous schemes had been brought to a decided failure, and he stood uncovered in all his evil purpose, thanks to Pat.

He was given the hardest sentence the law could impose upon him.

Nellie Dawson was soon forthcoming, and in due time she and Thaddeus were wed.

Thaddeus had been nearly crazed by her disappearance, and in his eager searching for her Mr. Dawson had been unable to reach him to make a personal explanation.

On the night of the attack upon him, Thaddeus had been drugged by his brother and taken into that low quarter of the city, where everything had been prepared for his being murdered. But that had failed in the first instance, and we have seen what followed.

The police called it one of the greatest cases that had come under their notice in a long time, and to Pat was given the bulk of the credit for the working out of the mystery. He and Fan-tan Tom felt jolly enough over it, and Pat's sister shared in their joy. They were handsomely rewarded, and from that time on Pat was known as "the Street-Boy Detective."

THE END.

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